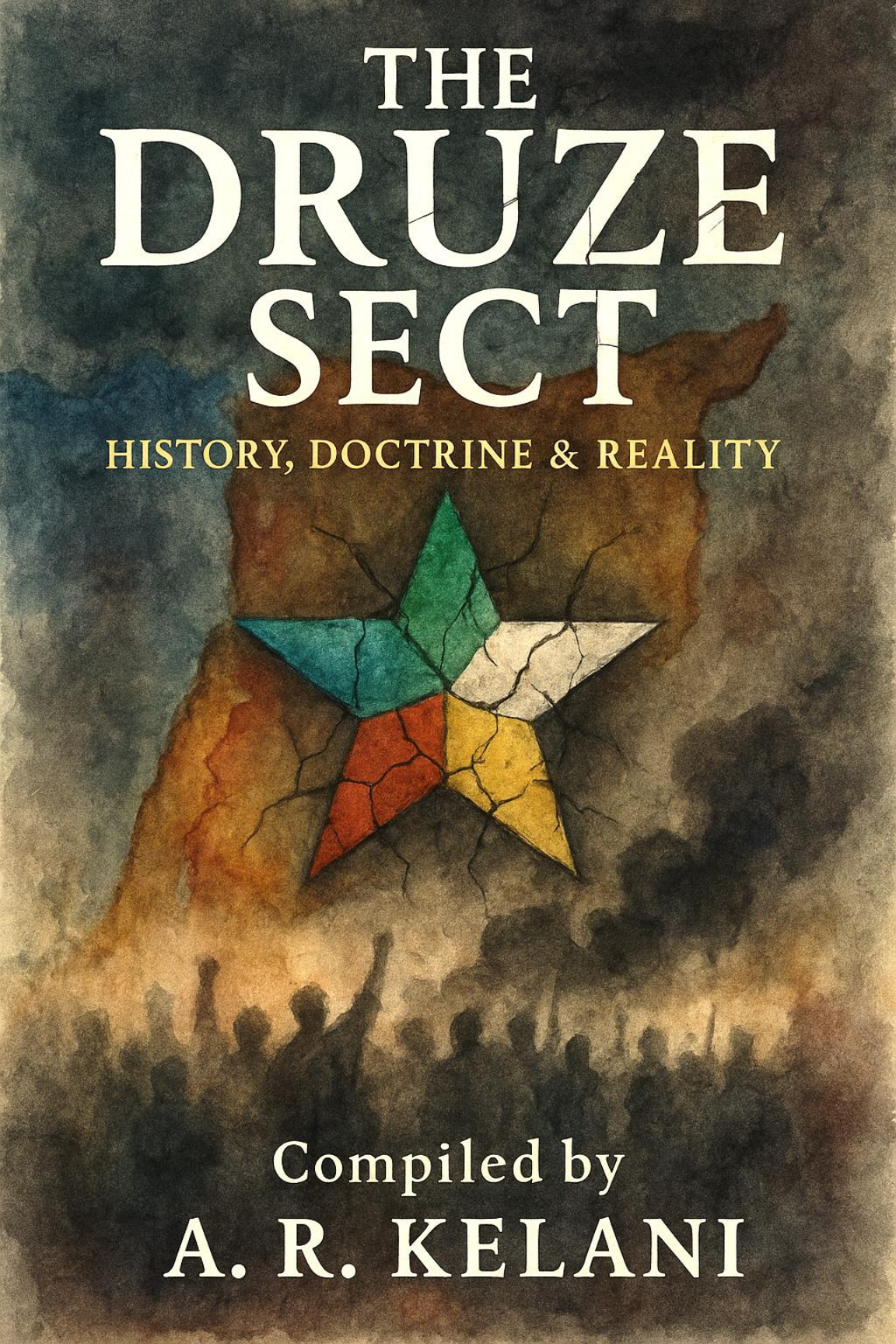
# THE DRUZE SECT

## HISTORY, DOCTRINE & REALITY



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A. R. KELANI

# The Druze Sect

## History, Doctrine & Reality

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# Contents

**Introduction** ..... **6**

**Origins and the Intellectual Environment** ..... **9**

The Doctrinal Emergence of Ismaʿilism – Roots, Motives, and Historical Backgrounds ..... 10

The Fatimid State and the Cradle of the Daʿwah ..... 16

**Druze Doctrine – A Critical Analysis** ..... **21**

The Druze Doctrine from Within – Presentation and Analysis ..... 22

The Druze in the Theological Scale of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah ..... 38

**The Political and Military History of the Druze Sect** ..... **44**

Geographic Dispersion and the Construction of Local Identity ..... 45

Ethnic Origins and the Spread of the Druze in Bilād al-Shām ..... 50

The Druze in the Era of the Crusades and Mongol Invasions ..... 53

From Sectarian Isolation to Regional Power: Fakhr al-Dīn II and the Rise of Druze Influence ..... 58

The Druze During the Mutasarrifiyyah and the French Mandate: From Rebellion to Sectarian Balance ..... 65

**The Druze in the Modern Era** ..... **69**

The Druze in Lebanon: From Civil Wars to Sectarian Principalities 70

The Druze in Syria: From Jabal al-ʿArab to the Battle for Identity (2025) ..... 81

The Druze in Palestine: From Mandate Forces to the Golani Brigade ..... 89

The Druze in Syria: From Neutrality to Hostility — Sectarian Shifts in the Revolutionary Era and Beyond ..... 97

The Druze Between Secrecy and Transparency — Challenges of Understanding ..... 104

Toward a Sunni Understanding of the Druze Reality Today ..... 107

Between Secrecy and Identity: The Druze at a Crossroads in Contemporary History ..... 110

Epilogue ..... 113

**Appendices ..... 115**

Appendix I: Key Figures in Druze History ..... 115

Appendix II: Timeline of Key Historical Milestones in Druze History ..... 119

Appendix III: Glossary of Key Terms and Doctrines ..... 123

Appendix III: Doctrinal Concepts and Terminology in Druze Theology ..... 126

Appendix IV: Core Theological Concepts in Druze Doctrine ..... 131

Appendix V: Have the Druze Contributed to Islamic Civilization? — An Analytical Reflection ..... 136

Appendix VI: Selected Passages from the Epistles of Wisdom ..... 140

**Bibliography ..... 143**

**Index of Proper Names ..... 145**

**Index of Key Terms ..... 147**

# Introduction

In the mountainous corners of the Levant, on the fringes of the political and spiritual formations that shaped Islamic history, a sect emerged—mysterious in doctrine, secretive in ritual, and neutral in the conflicts of the Muslim ummah—yet deeply influential in the realms of power and politics. This is the Druze sect.

For centuries, the Druze have posed an enigma to the Islamic and Arab mind. They are neither a group completely severed from Islam, nor are they openly or doctrinally aligned with Sunni or Shia Islam. Their stance has oscillated between withdrawal and engagement, caution and integration, silence and allegiance—especially in critical junctures of Muslim history, from the Crusader and Mongol invasions to the era of French colonialism, and more recently in their positions toward Zionism in Palestine and the revolution in Syria.

This book is not a response to Orientalist curiosity, nor is it an exploration of obscure identities for the sake of exoticism. Rather, it is a serious attempt to understand this sect comprehensively—from its doctrinal origins in esoteric Ismaʿilism, to its closed monotheistic belief system (*tawhīd*), to its political and military role in the history of Greater Syria, and finally to its contemporary posture and interaction with major issues facing the Muslim world.

Because the pursuit of truth cannot be achieved through narrative alone, this work follows a dual methodology: On one hand, it presents historical events and facts with rigorous documentation and objective academic analysis, drawing from Druze, Islamic, and Western sources.

On the other hand, it incorporates the theological lens of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah, clarifying the Islamic position on the Druze creed as articulated by classical and modern scholars—from Ibn Taymiyyah to Ihsan Ilahi Zaheer.

The purpose of this book is not to issue blanket judgments or provoke sectarian discord, but rather to offer a fair and well-substantiated exposition that places the Druze within their proper religious and historical context. It aims to reveal to the discerning reader how this sect emerged, what it truly believes, and where it has stood on the major causes of Islam.

This study comes at a time when doctrinal boundaries have blurred, historical truths have been replaced by politicized narratives, and sound Islamic criteria have been eroded by calls for "legitimate diversity" and "sectarian pluralism." In such a climate, the need arises to renew our understanding, liberate our awareness, and articulate our stance using the balanced scales of both knowledge and faith.

Let this book be a window—both scholarly and theological—into a sect that remains geographically and historically present, yet doctrinally and ideologically closed. A window, we hope, that will illuminate understanding, sharpen insight, and build a bridge between truth and justice.

**Research Methodology and Structure of the Book**

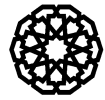
This book adopts a critical, analytical, and documentary approach that balances the tools of academic research with the theological perspective of Sunni Islam (Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah). The sources consulted reflect a wide range of backgrounds and references, including:

- **Primary Druze texts**, such as the *Epistles of Wisdom* (*Rasāʾil al-Hikmah*) and internal narratives transmitted within the sect;
- **Classical Islamic historical works** by renowned historians such as al-Dhahabi, Ibn al-Athir, al-Maqrizi, and others;
- **Modern Western studies** examining the Druze from sociopolitical and anthropological perspectives;
- **Sunni theological writings** that have critically examined the doctrines of the Druze and Ismaʿili movements, particularly the works of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ihsan Ilahi Zaheer, and others.

The book is organized into chapters and sections that cover:

1. The sect's doctrinal emergence;
2. Its Ismaʿili background;
3. The intellectual framework of Druze theology;
4. Their historical trajectory;
5. Their modern political and social status;
6. And finally, the Islamic ruling and theological assessment of the sect.

# Origins and the Intellectual Environment



# 1

## The Doctrinal Emergence of Ismaʿilism – Roots, Motives, and Historical Backgrounds

The Ismaʿili movement first arose as a *Bātinī* (esoteric) sect that split from the larger Imāmī Shīʿī current. However, it soon evolved into an independent ideological and organizational force with its own distinct theological structure and philosophical underpinnings. At various stages in its development, it took on a clandestine political character aimed at undermining the Sunni ʿAbbāsid caliphate and—according to numerous Sunni scholars—even sought to dismantle Islam from within. This movement, especially in its revolutionary and esoteric phases, served as the fertile ground from which the Druze faith would later emerge in the fifth Islamic century (11th century CE).

To understand how the Druze doctrine crystallized, one must first trace the roots of Ismaʿilism itself—examining its historical, theological, and political motives. This includes analyzing its links with earlier Gnostic and philosophical currents, as well as investigating suspicions about its infiltration by elements from Jewish and Persian traditions who sought to weaken Islam internally.

## I. Historical and Intellectual Roots of Ismaʿilism

Ismailism began as an offshoot of Imāmī Shīʿism following the death of Imām Jaʿfar al-Sādiq in 148 AH / 765 CE. The Shīʿī community split into two main factions:

- The **Twelvers (Ithnā ʿAshariyyah)**, who believed that the Imamate passed to his son Mūsā al-Kāẓim.
- The **Ismaʿilis**, who held that the Imamate remained with Jaʿfar's son **Ismāʿīl** or his grandson **Muhammad ibn Ismāʿīl**, despite the fact that Ismāʿīl had died during his father's lifetime.

This schism, however, was not merely a genealogical dispute—it marked the beginning of a profound doctrinal and philosophical divergence. The Ismaʿilis quickly gravitated toward an esoteric interpretation of Islamic texts, rejecting the outward meanings (*ẓāhir*) of Islamic law in favor of hidden (*bāṭin*) truths. Their theology absorbed elements of Gnostic cosmology, Neoplatonist metaphysics, Persian dualism, and even Indian and Eastern religious motifs.

By the third Islamic century, Ismaʿilism had developed into a highly organized movement operating in secretive cells. Iraq, Yemen, and Persia became its main centers. Outwardly, its mission promoted "esoteric knowledge" (*ʿilm al-bātin*), but politically, it sought the overthrow of the Sunni ʿAbbāsid state and the establishment of an alternative, esoterically inspired caliphate.

## II. Esotericism and Philosophical Underpinnings

A hallmark of mature Ismaʿili doctrine was its esoteric worldview: every religious law, ritual, and text possessed a hidden, symbolic meaning accessible only to an elite class of initiates. The outward acts of worship—such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage—

were reinterpreted as metaphysical symbols, eventually discarded altogether in favor of internalized, spiritualized alternatives. The movement claimed access to "divine knowledge" (*ʿilm ladunni*) and "luminous intellect" (*al-ʿaql al-nūrāni*), to which only the initiated could aspire.

Ismaʿili thought was profoundly influenced by **Gnosticism**, a religious-philosophical tradition that held the material world to be intrinsically evil and posited salvation through hidden knowledge (*gnosis*) known only to a spiritual elite. This belief led to the division of humanity into hierarchical categories: the enlightened (*khāssa*) and the ignorant masses (*ʿāmma*).

They were also deeply indebted to **Neoplatonism**, especially the metaphysics of **Plotinus** and **Plato**, with its theories of emanation (*fayd*), the chain of intellects, and the structure of existence emanating from a single "First Intellect" (*al-ʿaql al-awwal*). These ideas were adapted into Ismaʿili cosmology, as evidenced in texts like the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (*Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Safāʾ*), the writings of the Fatimid daʿwah, and the *Epistles of Wisdom* (*Rasāʾil al-Hikmah*), which were later foundational for the Druze.

## III. Secret Organization and the Undermining of the Islamic State

From the third century AH onward, the Ismaʿili movement operated as a highly secretive network with carefully tiered systems of initiation. Doctrine was revealed progressively to new members, following a hierarchy of **seven levels of concealment**, where the deeper truths of the faith were known only to the upper echelons.

A vast system of *duʿāt* (missionaries) was dispatched to spread the creed covertly, build underground communities, and lay the groundwork for revolutionary action. One of the most infamous offshoots of this system was the **Nizārī Ismaʿili faction**, founded

by **Hasan ibn al-Sabbāh**, which gave rise to the **Assassins**—a secret order renowned for its political assassinations of prominent Sunni leaders and figures.

In North Africa, the Ismaʿilis succeeded in establishing the **Fātimid Caliphate**, beginning in the Maghreb in 297 AH / 909 CE and later conquering Egypt in 358 AH / 969 CE. Cairo became the intellectual and political capital of Ismaʿilism. It was within this Ismaʿili–Fatimid context that the **Druze movement** would later emerge.

**IV. Alleged Links with Judaism and Zoroastrianism**

Numerous Muslim scholars accused the Ismaʿilis of being ideologically connected to Persian dualism and Zoroastrianism, and of being infiltrated by Jewish elements hostile to Islam. Among the earliest and most prominent voices in this regard:

- **Imām Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī**, who wrote in *Fadāʾih al-Bāṭiniyyah* that the Ismaʿilis were not a religious community but a political conspiracy exploiting religion to deceive the masses while holding no belief in it themselves.[1]
- **Ihsān Ilāhī Zahīr**, who elaborated extensively on the Ismaʿilis' connections with Persian *Zindīq* heresies and alleged that both Jewish and Persian agents played a major role in constructing the movement's hidden framework.

These accusations are bolstered by historical records indicating that ʿ**Abd Allāh ibn Maymūn al-Qaddah**, one of the founders of early Ismaʿilism, had obscure origins and possibly heterodox affiliations. The organizational structure of Ismaʿilism bears striking resemblances to **ancient Persian secret societies** like the *Dehqānate*, as well as to **Jewish traditions** of secret instruction and the restriction of divine knowledge to a priestly elite.

## V. From Esotericism to Deification: The Link to the Druze Emergence

By the time of the Fatimid caliph **al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh** (r. 996–1021 CE), the Ismaʿili environment had become increasingly radical and esoteric. In this climate, extreme factions began to **deify the caliph**, viewing him as a divine emanation or manifestation of the cosmic intellect.

From this milieu arose the Druze movement, led by figures such as **Hamzah ibn ʿAlī** and **Muhammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Darazī**, who proclaimed al-Hākim as an embodiment of God Himself. They rejected the pillars of Islam, adopted a theology based on **incarnation (*hulūl*)** and **metempsychosis (*tanāsukh*)**, and developed a closed system of initiation and secrecy—hallmarks of the Druze creed to this day.

## Conclusion

The Ismaʿili doctrine—esoteric, philosophical, and politically subversive—represented one of the most dangerous deviations in Islamic intellectual history. It posed as Islam while undermining its foundations, preached enlightenment while enforcing secrecy, and manipulated religion as a tool for power and control. Its ideological and organizational models laid the groundwork for the emergence of the Druze sect, which represented a later and more radical evolution of this inner-Islamic esotericism.

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# 2

# The Fatimid State and the Cradle of the Daʿwah

## The Rise of the Fatimid Caliphate and Ismaʿilism — Al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh and the Turbulent Era

The emergence of the Druze faith was not a sudden or isolated occurrence within the landscape of Islamic sects. Rather, it was the culmination of a long and complex development within the *Bāṭinī* (esoteric) framework of Ismaʿilism, unfolding within a highly sensitive religious and political context: the zenith of the Fatimid Caliphate. Understanding the origins of the Fatimid state and the doctrinal evolution of Ismaʿilism is essential to grasp the fertile ground from which the Druze *tawḥīd* movement later arose.[1]

## I. The Seeds of Revolution: Ismaʿilism in the Shadow of the ʿAbbāsids

By the late second century AH (8th century CE), during a period of internal unrest within the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate, an underground movement began to grow—a clandestine force that moved from region to region, bearing a vision for an alternative Islamic order. This force would come to be known as Ismaʿilism, a Shīʿī sect that broke away from mainstream Jaʿfarī Shīʿism after the death of

[1] See "An Overview of the Ubaydid (Fatimid) State," by A. R. Kelani

Imām Jaʿfar al-Sādiq. Its adherents insisted that the Imamate had passed not to Mūsā al-Kāzim, but to Jaʿfar's son Ismāʿīl, or to his progeny Muhammad ibn Ismāʿīl—thus establishing a new line of Imams, the seventh of whom, they believed, entered a state of occultation (*ghaybah*), after which began a period of secret daʿwah.

From the beginning, the Ismaʿili movement was characterized by strict secrecy, hierarchical structure, and revolutionary aspirations. It was less a theological school than a missionary-political network. Its chief center in early years was the town of Salamiyya in the Syrian steppe, where a cadre of highly disciplined *duʿāt* (missionaries) operated under the cover of *taqiyyah* (religious dissimulation). Among them were Maymūn al-Qaddāh and his son ʿAbd Allāh, considered the ideological architects of what would later evolve into the Fatimid Caliphate.[1]

Before this movement achieved statehood, however, it fractured into multiple competing factions. One of the most notorious was the Qarmatians, who based themselves in Bahrain and launched a series of bloody uprisings against the ʿAbbāsids—including the theft of the Black Stone from the Kaʿbah in 317 AH (929 CE). Other splinter groups surfaced in Kūfa, Basra, Yemen, and Khurāsān, reflecting the volatility and doctrinal experimentation prevalent in the Shīʿī world during that era.

**II. The Rise of the Fatimid Dynasty in North Africa**

Amid this turbulent landscape appeared a figure named Saʿīd ibn al-Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Maymūn al-Qaddāh—a man who would later rename himself ʿUbayd Allāh al-Mahdī. Claiming descent from Fātimah al-Zahrāʾ and ʿAlī ibn Abū Ṭālib, he sought to establish his legitimacy as the awaited Mahdī and *maʿsūm* Imam. Yet many Sunni scholars and genealogical researchers disputed his lineage, asserting that it was fabricated and

that his true origins traced back to Persian clients (*mawālī*) of questionable background.

Leaving Salamiyya, ʿUbayd Allāh traveled through the Levant and Egypt, eventually reaching the Maghrib (modern-day Algeria and Tunisia). There, he secured the loyalty of the powerful Kutāma Berbers and declared the founding of the Fatimid State in 297 AH/909 CE. He took the title al-Mahdī, claiming to be the hidden Imam whose reappearance would usher in a new esoteric dispensation.

The Fatimids' decision to launch their state from the distant Maghrib—far from Sunni power centers like Baghdad and Damascus—was a calculated move that allowed them to consolidate power without immediate confrontation with the ʿAbbāsids. ʿUbayd Allāh built the city of al-Mahdiyya on the Tunisian coast and made it the capital of his regime. From there, he dispatched *duʿāt* to Egypt and Yemen in preparation for future conquests.

From its inception, the Fatimid project was met with fierce theological opposition from Sunni scholars. It was denounced as heretical on multiple grounds: its dubious genealogical claims, its esoteric reinterpretation of the Qurʾān, and its dismissal of *sharīʿah* obligations. The famed historian al-Dhahabī wrote,

"They are heretics (*zanādiqah*), Magians (*majūs*), unbelievers (*kuffār*) who give no weight to the *sharīʿah*, believe not in the apparent meanings of the Qurʾān, and have deceived the people under the guise of the Prophet's family."[3]

For this reason, many Sunni chroniclers refused to call them "Fātimids," referring to them instead as the ʿUbaydiyyūn, to dissociate them from Fātimah.

## III. Expansion into Egypt and the Height of the Fatimid Power

Over the following decades, the Fatimids consolidated their control over Ifrīqiyyah (Tunisia and eastern Algeria). It was not until the reign of al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh that their most ambitious goal was realized: the conquest of Egypt, the heart of the Islamic world. In 358 AH / 969 CE, al-Muʿizz led his forces from al-Mahdiyya and entered Egypt without major resistance. There he founded the city of Cairo (al-Qāhirah) and built al-Azhar Mosque, which would become a major center for Ismaʿili doctrine and missionary activity.

Outwardly, the Fatimids adopted a policy of religious tolerance and political pragmatism. Inwardly, however, their theological agenda continued to evolve toward ever-deeper levels of *bātinī* interpretation. The Imam was seen as the infallible interpreter of divine will—the sole possessor of the inner meanings of revelation. The hierarchy of *duʿāt* functioned as intermediaries of divine wisdom, guiding adherents through tightly controlled levels of esoteric knowledge.

## IV. The Rule of al-ʿAzīz and the Rise of al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh

After al-Muʿizz, the caliphate passed to al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh, who was notable for his maternal Jewish ancestry and for his open inclusion of Christians and Jews in state institutions. He was succeeded by his eleven-year-old son al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh in 386 AH / 996 CE—a figure who would become one of the most controversial personalities in Islamic history.

Al-Hākim's reign was marked by contradictory behavior, theological ambiguity, and despotic measures. He enacted eccentric decrees such as banning women from appearing in public, forbidding certain foods, outlawing specific schools of law, and then reversing those same decrees. He ordered the destruction of

the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, only to later authorize its reconstruction. These erratic decisions created one of the most unstable periods in Fatimid governance.

In the midst of this instability, the Druze daʿwah was born—launched by figures operating within the heart of the Fatimid system, most notably Hamzah ibn ʿAlī ibn Ahmad and Muhammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Darazī. They proclaimed that al-Hākim was not merely a caliph, but a divine incarnation—a *maẓhar ilāhī*, a physical manifestation of God Himself, who had descended to unveil the supreme esoteric unity (*al-tawhīd al-akbar*).

**Conclusion**

The story of the Druze sect begins here—not as a mere continuation of Ismaʿilism, but as a radical break, an escalation into full-fledged deification, the abrogation of religious duties, and eventually, the closure of the daʿwah altogether. These defining features would be explored in greater depth in the following chapter.

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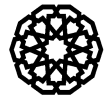
# Druze Doctrine – A Critical Analysis



# 3

## The Druze Doctrine from Within – Presentation and Analysis

The casual reader may be surprised to discover that members of the Druze sect do not call themselves "Druze" at all. In fact, they consider this label a historical distortion that has little to do with their true identity. Instead, they refer to themselves as "the People of Monotheism" (*Ahl al-Tawhīd*) or "the Unitarians" (*al-Muwahhidūn*), and they describe their religion as "the Unitarian Call" (*al-daʿwah al-tawhīdiyyah*). This name reflects their claim to uphold the purest form of divine oneness—what they describe as an inner, esoteric understanding of *tawhīd*, free from all forms of idolatry, anthropomorphism, and legalistic superficiality. [1]

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[1] The Origin of the Name "Unitarian Sect"
The Druze refer to themselves as "the People of Monotheism" (*Ahl al-Tawhīd*) or simply "the Unitarians" (*al-Muwahhidūn*). They claim to uphold a pure and absolute form of *tawhīd* (divine oneness), one that is free from anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) or embodiment (*tajsīm*), and unbound by the literal meanings of scripture. Instead, they pursue what they describe as "intellectual, inner, absolute monotheism" (*al-tawhīd al-ʿaqlī al-bātinī al-mutlaq*). Among their followers, this creed is known as *"the Unitarian Call"* (*al-daʿwah al-tawḥīdiyyah*), and their doctrinal texts—most notably the *Epistles of Wisdom* (*Rasāʾil al-Hikmah*)—consistently affirm this name.
In contrast, the commonly used name "Druze" is derived from Muhammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Darazī, one of the early missionaries who spread their doctrine. However, he was a controversial figure whom the Druze later rejected. For this reason, they internally reject the name "Druze," considering it an external label that does not reflect the true essence of their faith.

However, this bold claim to monotheism quickly collapses under the weight of any serious theological inquiry. The doctrine adopted by the Druze since the 5th century AH (11th century CE) is grounded in deeply esoteric, gnostic, and philosophical foundations—a worldview that systematically contradicts the revealed concept of *tawḥīd* upheld by the prophets. The "monotheism" championed in the Druze sacred text, the **Epistles**

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Why Do They Claim Monotheism While Committing Polytheism?

From the standpoint of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah, merely claiming *tawḥīd* is not sufficient unless that claim conforms to the revelation and the divinely prescribed law. In the case of the Druze, several beliefs and practices place them in clear contradiction to authentic monotheism:

- They deify al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh, claiming he is a divine manifestation in human form;
- They deny the outward pillars of Islam, such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and almsgiving;
- They rely on esoteric interpretation (*taʾwīl bāṭinī*) of the Qur'an and Sunnah to the point of nullifying and discarding the revealed texts;
- They believe in reincarnation (*tanāsukh*), a doctrine that negates the belief in the Last Day, resurrection, and divine judgment.

Therefore, as clarified by Sunni scholars, the *tawḥīd* professed by the Druze is not genuine *tawḥīd*, but rather a philosophical, gnostic, esoteric construct with no relation to the monotheism preached by the prophets. It is a conception of divine unity closer to Eastern illuminative philosophy or Neoplatonism, in which God's attributes are negated, His actions denied, and *tawḥīd* becomes a mystical, intellectual idea embodied in a "divine Imam."

**Ibn Taymiyyah's Critique**

Ibn Taymiyyah, one of the foremost critics of esoteric and pseudo-Islamic philosophies, addressed these claims directly. In his critique of similar groups, he wrote:

"They call themselves the People of Monotheism, yet they are the farthest from it. They deny the Creator as distinct from His creation, and regard all existence as manifestations of Him. Their *shirk* (polytheism) and extremism are even greater than that of the original idolaters." — See: al-Radd ʿalā al-Bakrī

**Conclusion**

The Druze designation as "Unitarians" does not reflect genuine, divinely revealed monotheism. Rather, it is:

- Either an internal attempt to cloak their creed in an Islamic appearance,
- Or an esoteric philosophical concept that has deviated entirely from the revealed *tawḥīd* of the Lord of the worlds.

**of Wisdom (*Rasāʾil al-Hikmah*), is not the *tawhīd* of Noah,** Abraham, Moses, or Muhammad (peace be upon them.) Rather, it is a monotheism emptied of God's names and attributes, stripped of divine law and moral obligation, built upon the deification of the Fatimid caliph al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh, and centered on an extreme glorification of hidden knowledge (*al-bātin*) over divine revelation (*al-wahy*).

**A Monotheism That Undermines Divine Transcendence**

According to Druze belief, God manifested Himself in human form, specifically in the person of al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh, the eccentric and authoritarian Fatimid ruler who disappeared in 1021 CE. By affirming this incarnation, Druze theology denies God's transcendence and elevates a human to divine status. They assert that salvation lies in obedience to this divine figure, and they reject the outward practices of Islam—such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage—as unnecessary for those who attain esoteric truth.

In this framework, worship becomes irrelevant, obligations fall away, and divine guidance is no longer found in revealed scripture but in the pronouncements of the incarnate "Lord." This is not a form of monotheism, but a striking example of hidden polytheism (*shirk khafī*) masquerading in the language of philosophical mysticism.

**The Theological Contradiction: *Tawhīd* or *Shirk*?**

This paradox—calling themselves "People of Monotheism" while assigning divinity to a man—is not lost on the discerning theologian. Classical Sunni scholars were quick to expose this contradiction. Ibn Taymiyyah, the eminent scholar and theologian of the 7th/8th Islamic century, wrote:

"These people, known as the Nusayris and Ismaʿilis, are considered disbelievers by consensus of the Muslims... They claim

to be Muslim, but are more disbelieving than the Jews and Christians, and even more than many idolaters... They believe that God incarnates in their imams, advocate the doctrine of the unity of existence, accuse other Muslims of disbelief, and nullify the outward and inward practices of Islam."[1]

In other words, the Druze *tawḥīd* is not monotheism at all—it is a metaphysical system that undermines the very core of Islamic belief by erasing the Creator-creation distinction and replacing divine revelation with secret esoteric codes.

**The Core of the Druze Creed: Hidden Knowledge and Esoteric Hierarchy**

At the heart of the Druze doctrine is a closed system of belief transmitted through a hidden priestly elite. Their scriptures—the *Epistles of Wisdom*—are not accessible to the general public, nor even to most members of the sect. Only a privileged class of initiates, known as the ʿuqqāl (the "wise" or "knowers"), are allowed to study and interpret them. These *ʿuqqāl* serve as the custodians of truth, gatekeepers of salvation, and guardians of the inner meanings of the universe.

The religion functions much like ancient Gnostic systems: it divides humanity into two classes—the enlightened elite and the ignorant masses. It denies the universality of revelation, replacing it with the idea that true knowledge is the privilege of a few. Salvation, in this view, is not a matter of faith or action, but of belonging to the right spiritual class and gaining access to the hidden truth.

The Druze theology denies prophecy after al-Hākim, rejects the Qur'anic message as outward and symbolic only, and replaces

[1] *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, vol. 35, pp. 161-165.

revelation with a mystical metaphysics that borrows heavily from Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and earlier Ismaʿili esotericism.

**From Sharīʿah to Reincarnation: Theological Deviations**

With the denial of the outward law (*sharīʿah*), Druze doctrine replaces Islamic acts of worship with an inner ethical code that is largely defined by allegiance to the hierarchy and belief in reincarnation (*tanāsukh*). This belief holds that the soul migrates through multiple human forms in a cycle of purification and spiritual ascent. There is no concept of paradise or hell in the traditional sense—no Day of Judgment, no bodily resurrection. Instead, salvation is an inward process of enlightenment, achieved through secrecy, loyalty, and esoteric realization.

Thus, the Druze faith:

- Denies the divine attributes of God;
- Rejects the finality of prophethood;
- Abolishes Islamic rituals and obligations;
- Deifies a human being;
- Closes the door to conversion or daʿwah;
- Replaces the Hereafter with reincarnation.

These tenets clearly diverge not only from Sunni Islam, but from the core of Islam itself as revealed in the Qur'an and exemplified by the Prophet ﷺ.

**The Modern Misrepresentation: A Call for Clarity**

In recent decades, political narratives and interfaith discourse have portrayed the Druze as a "peaceful, monotheistic community" and an "authentic Islamic sect." This portrayal, while politically expedient, is factually and theologically misleading. It contributes to

the erosion of doctrinal clarity and fosters confusion about the boundaries of Islamic belief.

Studying the Druze creed, therefore, is not a matter of academic curiosity—it is a religious and intellectual obligation. It helps protect the integrity of Islamic theology and prevents the dilution of *tawḥīd* in the name of tolerance or relativism. The truth must be stated clearly: the Druze creed is closer to philosophical gnosticism than to any form of genuine Islamic monotheism.

**Purpose of This Chapter**

This chapter does not merely summarize the Druze beliefs. It undertakes a methodical and critical analysis of the doctrine based on the *Epistles of Wisdom*, placing them under the scrutiny of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the principles of orthodox Sunni theology. Our aim is to:

- Reveal the doctrinal deviations at the heart of the Druze faith;
- Distinguish between genuine *tawḥīd* and philosophical metaphysics;
- Uphold the clarity of divine revelation against esoteric secrecy;
- Do justice to history and creed alike.

This task is not driven by polemics or sectarianism, but by a sincere commitment to the truth, and to preserving the purity of the Islamic faith as conveyed by the final Prophet ﷺ.

**The Origin of the Term "Unitarian Sect"**

The Druze refer to themselves as "Ahl al-Tawhīd" (the People of Monotheism) or simply "al-Muwahhidūn" (the Unitarians). They claim to follow a pure monotheistic path that rejects anthropomorphism, corporealism, and the literal interpretation of

religious texts. Instead, they promote what they describe as an "absolute inner rational *tawīd*"—a kind of monotheism rooted in esoteric knowledge and intellectual abstraction. Within their community, their religious path is known as "al-Daʿwah al-Tawhīdiyyah" (the Unitarian Call), and their theological texts—most notably the *Rasāʾil al-Hikmah* (Epistles of Wisdom)—frequently affirm this self-designation.

The more common label "Druze" is derived from the name of Muhammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Darazī, one of the early propagators of their faith. However, al-Darazī remains a controversial figure whose views were eventually repudiated by the Druze leadership. For this reason, the community internally rejects the name "Druze" as a foreign or imposed term that misrepresents the essence of their doctrine.

**Why Do They Claim Monotheism While Falling into Polytheism?**

From the perspective of Sunni Islam, simply claiming to follow monotheism (*tawḥīd*) is insufficient if that claim does not conform to the revelation and divine law brought by the Prophets. When subjected to doctrinal scrutiny, the Druze belief system displays glaring contradictions to genuine *tawḥīd*. Specifically, the Druze:

- Deify al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh, claiming that he was a divine manifestation in human form;
- Reject the foundational rituals of Islam such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and almsgiving;
- Rely heavily on extreme esoteric reinterpretation (*taʾwīl bātinī*) of the Qur'an and Sunnah, often nullifying or disregarding the explicit texts altogether;
- Believe in reincarnation (*tanāsukh*), a doctrine rooted in polytheistic cosmologies that negates belief in the

Resurrection, the Day of Judgment, and divine accountability.

For these reasons, what they call *tawḥīd* is, according to Sunni scholars, a distorted and philosophical concept divorced from revealed religion. It resembles more closely the esoteric mysticism of Eastern philosophies such as Neoplatonism or Hindu Vedanta, rather than the monotheism of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Muḥammad (peace be upon them). Their version of tawḥīd negates God's names and attributes, denies His actions, and instead treats monotheism as a purely inward rational abstraction that finds its highest expression in the figure of the "divine imam."

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah critiqued these doctrines with powerful clarity, stating:

"They call themselves the People of Monotheism, yet they are the farthest from it. They deny a Creator distinct from His creation and claim that all existing things are manifestations of the divine… Their polytheism and extremism exceed even that of the early idolaters."
(*See*: *al-Radd ʿala al-Bakrī* by Ibn Taymiyyah)

**The Emergence of Druze Doctrine**

The Druze doctrine arose within a highly complex intellectual and religious milieu in the late fourth and early fifth centuries AH, during the era of the Fatimid Caliphate, which had adopted the esoteric Ismaʿili madhhab. Although the Druze trace their origins to the *Call to Monotheism* (*daʿwat al-tawhīd*) proclaimed by al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh in 408 AH, the doctrinal roots of this call extend much deeper, shaped by a range of philosophical and spiritual traditions.

In the isolation of mountainous landscapes—and through obscure texts layered in secrecy—the creed of the Druze community gradually took form, known within its own literature as the *Unitarian Doctrine* (*al-ʿaqīda al-tawḥīdiyya*). At its essence, however, this creed is a metaphysical and esoteric system, rooted in Ubaydid Ismaʿili thought but ultimately departing from it in significant ways: by deifying the figure of al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh, rejecting the outward obligations of Islamic law, and embracing reincarnation (*taqammus*) as a key to understanding human destiny.

The principal source of Druze doctrine is the corpus known as the *Epistles of Wisdom* (*Rasāʾil al-Ḥikma*), composed during the Druze missionary period between 408 and 434 AH by Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad and his companions. These writings constitute the foundational texts that crystallized the Druze creed in its final form—rich in symbolism, steeped in esoteric hermeneutics, and distinctly detached from the broader Islamic tradition.

### I. The Doctrinal Source: *The Epistles of Wisdom*

The "Epistles of Wisdom" (*Rasāʾil al-Hikma*) comprise approximately 111 treatises—though accounts vary, with some sources listing 111 and others as many as 157—attributed to the founders of the Unitarian Call (*daʿwat al-tawḥīd*). Chief among these figures are:

- **Hamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Ahmad** – regarded as the chief architect of the Druze doctrine and known as *Hādī al-Mustajībīn* ("The Guide of the Responders").
- **Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Samūqī** – recognized as the author of the final epistle.
- **Ismāʿīl al-Tamīmī al-Tanūkhī** – one of the foremost missionaries of the early call.

- **Al-Husayn ibn Hamdān al-Khasībī** and **Muhammad ibn Wahb al-Qurashī** – key figures during the foundational phase of the daʿwah.

These epistles are marked by their intensely symbolic language, layered ambiguity, and esoteric hermeneutics. Their reading or study is explicitly forbidden for the uninitiated—referred to in Druze terminology as *al-juhhāl* ("the ignorant"). To this day, the *Rasāʾil* remain under strict religious secrecy, accessible only to those who have undergone a formal process of spiritual advancement. This includes a ritual pledge of allegiance (*bayʿa*) and full induction into the elite circle of the *ʿuqqāl* (the "wise" or enlightened ones), who alone are entrusted with the deeper meanings of the faith.

Here is your polished passage, revised for clarity, elegance, and publication-level academic tone. I've retained your structure and nuance while enhancing consistency, flow, and scholarly precision:

### II. Religious Ranks: The *Juhhāl* and the *ʿUqqāl*

Druze religious society is formally divided into two distinct ranks:

- **The *Juhhāl*** ("the ignorant"): This group comprises the general populace who are denied access to the full doctrine. They are regarded as living in spiritual darkness, expected to obey and conform without receiving knowledge of the deeper teachings.

- **The *ʿUqqāl*** ("the enlightened"): This is the initiated elite granted access to *al-ḥikma* ("the wisdom"). Their lives are characterized by asceticism, piety, and strict discipline. They are entrusted with interpreting the sacred texts and guiding the community in both doctrine and conduct.

Entry into the class of the *ʿuqqāl* requires the performance of a solemn covenant (*mīthāq*) before a council of elders. This rite includes an oath of secrecy and a lifelong commitment not to reveal the inner teachings—even to one's closest relatives.

This hierarchical division is not merely administrative; it is central to Druze theology, which posits that ultimate truth is not accessible to all. Instead, it is veiled from the masses and disclosed only to a spiritually awakened few. The path to *ḥikma* is thus an elite spiritual journey rather than a universally available revelation.

### III. The Pillars of Druze Doctrine

The Druze creed diverges fundamentally from the outward practices of Islamic law. It does not uphold the canonical five pillars of Islam (prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage, and testimony of faith). Instead, it proposes five inward, esoteric pillars, rooted in metaphysical and spiritual ideals:

1. **Truthfulness in speech** (*al-ṣidq fī al-qawl*)
2. **Mutual protection and solidarity among believers** *(ḥifẓ al-ikẖwān*)
3. **Renunciation of all forms of false worship** (*barāʾa min ʿibādat al-ṭāgẖūt*), based on their distinctive interpretation of divine unity
4. **Disavowal of enemies of the faith** (*barāʾa min al-aʿdāʾ*), defined as those who reject the doctrine
5. **Complete submission to the will of God** (*al-ridā bi-fiʿl Allāh*)

Notably absent are ritual obligations such as *ṣalāh* (prayer), *ṣawm* (fasting), *ẓakāh* (almsgiving), and *ḥajj* (pilgrimage). These acts are reinterpreted as allegories for deeper spiritual truths. The Druze

tradition maintains that such outward rites were appropriate during the earlier *ages of concealment*, but that the current *age of wisdom* (*ʿasr al-hikma*) transcends them, having been granted access to the inner reality of faith.

### IV. The Druze Position on Islamic Sharīʿa

The Druze doctrinal stance on Islamic *sharīʿa* reflects a fundamental departure from normative Islamic practice. They hold that the outward obligations of the *sharīʿa*—such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage—are no longer binding in the current spiritual epoch. According to their belief, these rituals were abrogated with the advent of the new *daʿwa* (mission). Instead, the Druze emphasize *ʿibāda ʿaqliyya bātiniyya*—an "intellectual, esoteric worship"—which manifests as obedience to the divine manifestation of al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh and the pursuit of spiritual ascent through the degrees of wisdom.

This view is articulated in the *Epistle of Purpose and Counsel* (*Risālat al-Ghāya wa-l-Nassīha*), attributed to Hamza ibn ʿAlī, where it is stated that anyone who denies his Lord in this age or hesitates in submitting to Him "is among the losers," and that outward religious deeds alone will be of no benefit to such a person.

### V. The Deification of al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh

Although Druze theology initially developed from within the esoteric currents of Ismāʿīlī thought—which already emphasized symbolic interpretation and veneration of the Imams—the Druze took this trajectory further by explicitly deifying al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh. This doctrinal evolution marked a theological rupture even from mainstream Ismāʿīlism.

The critical turning point came when prominent early Druze missionaries—most notably Hamza ibn ʿAlī and Muḥammad ibn

Ismāʿīl al-Darazī—proclaimed that al-Hākim was not merely an Imam or Caliph, but a divine manifestation in human form. This bold assertion catalyzed the Druze community's withdrawal from broader society and their consolidation into a closed, highly secretive religious structure.

This act of deification remains the most radical theological departure within Druze belief. According to the *Rasāʾil al-Hikma*, al-Hākim did not die or suffer assassination, but instead "entered occultation" and will one day return. He is described with exalted titles such as "the Word," "the Universal Intellect," and "the Manifestation of Unity." Several epistles declare that "God appeared in human form," and depict al-Hākim as the luminous force by which minds perceive, the One who manifested in pure human bodies, and through whom truth is unveiled and falsehood exposed.

This belief is not a hidden esoteric mystery for the *ʿuqqāl*; rather, it is a foundational tenet within their doctrine. However, it remains concealed from the *juhhāl* and the broader public, in strict observance of the Druze system of hierarchical concealment. This structure of secrecy has preserved the esoteric and exclusivist nature of the Druze faith from its inception to the present day.

### VI. The Doctrine of Reincarnation

Perhaps the most distinctive element of Druze theology is the doctrine of *taqammus*—reincarnation. This belief holds that the soul, upon death, transmigrates into another human body in an unending cycle aimed at the soul's perfection and ultimate union with the *Universal Intellect*. Within this metaphysical framework, traditional Islamic doctrines concerning the afterlife—such as bodily resurrection, paradise and hell, and divine judgment—are effectively nullified.

In Druze belief, paradise is interpreted as the attainment of *hikma* (wisdom), hell as the state of *jahl* (ignorance), and divine reckoning as an internal, ongoing process within the soul itself. The spirit is either elevated or degraded in accordance with its condition and conduct in its new incarnation.

This concept displaces the Islamic principle of *maʿād* (return to God and bodily resurrection), representing a radical departure from core tenets of Islamic eschatology. In its philosophical structure and metaphysical orientation, the Druze view of the soul aligns more closely with Eastern religious systems such as Hinduism, Manichaeism, and Zoroastrianism—traditions that had, over centuries, permeated esoteric currents within Islamic history. These traditions provided fertile ground for a Druze cosmology steeped in allegory, symbolism, and a deep metaphysical reading of reality.

**Conclusion**

The Druze creed emerged as a sophisticated synthesis of esoteric Ismāʿīlī elements, Gnostic philosophy, Neoplatonic metaphysics, and spiritual concepts drawn from ancient Eastern religions. It coalesced into a closed religious-political project under the banner of *Tawḥīd* ("Unitarianism"), aiming at the spiritual elevation and political rule of an enlightened elite. This project first manifested during the revolutionary aspirations of the Fatimid state, but following the political collapse of the Druze *daʿwa*, it retreated into concealment—recasting itself as a cryptic sect that severed ties with the wider Muslim community.

The *Epistles of Wisdom* (*Rasāʾil al-Hikma*)—the exclusive doctrinal corpus of the Druze—encapsulate this closed theological system. They reveal a worldview grounded in esoteric hermeneutics, hierarchical initiation, rejection of Islamic exotericism and its legal pillars, and the elevation of a spiritual aristocracy that alone possesses access to truth.

The Druze doctrine is thus not merely a sectarian variation or interpretive school within Islam; it constitutes a full theological rupture. While the community may present itself as inclusive or tolerant in social or political contexts, this openness is largely superficial. The doctrinal core remains sealed behind layers of secrecy, accessible only to those who have undergone the rites of *mīthāq* (allegiance) and *taʿaqqul* (initiation into wisdom).

Although the Druze refer to themselves as *Ahl al-Tawhīd* ("The People of Monotheism"), their theology—when examined against the prophetic tradition, the *sharīʿa* of Islam, and the creed of *Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jamāʿa*—reveals profound and irreconcilable divergences. These theological departures will be the subject of critical analysis in the following chapter.

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# 4

## The Druze in the Theological Scale of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah

Having explored the doctrines of the Druze in the previous chapter through their primary sources, we now turn to the doctrinal scale of Islamic orthodoxy—Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaʿah—to evaluate this creed through the lens of scholars recognized as the custodians of divine revelation, the heirs of Prophetic methodology in affirming monotheism, safeguarding the faith from distortion, and upholding religious clarity and balance.

From the earliest generations, the Islamic ummah was distinguished by its sharp clarity in theological concepts. Any deviation from the principles of *tawḥīd*, suspension of the authority of revelation, or innovation in foundational beliefs was met with scholarly response—not out of hatred or sectarian zeal—but as an act of mercy to the ummah, a defense of truth, and a deep concern for the purity of faith. It is within this framework that the scholars of Islam approached esoteric sects in general, and the Druze creed in particular.

### I. The General Position of Sunni Scholars Towards Esoteric Sects

Esoteric sects such as the Ismāʿīliyya, Qarmatiyya, and the Druze were subject to near-unanimous consensus among Sunni

scholars regarding the danger they pose to faith and community. These sects are marked by several defining traits:

- **Suspension of Islamic Law:** They deny the outward law and claim that sacred texts possess secret meanings accessible only to specific spiritual elites like the "Imām" or "Dāʿī."
- **Deification of Human Figures:** They assign divine attributes to historical leaders and claim infallibility or godhood.
- **Denial of Pillars of Islam:** The five pillars are dismissed or reinterpreted through symbolic or metaphysical lenses.
- **Secrecy and Sectarian Loyalty:** Their doctrines emphasize concealment, dissimulation (taqiyya), and an allegiance that runs parallel to and often in contradiction with the broader Muslim ummah.

Al-Dhahabī, commenting on the Fātimid dynasty (also known as the ʿUbaydīs), wrote:

"The Ubaydid state in Egypt was characterized as Rāfidī (Shiʿite) and Bātinī (esoteric), marked by elements of heresy (*ẓandaqa*). Its viziers openly espoused Shiʿite beliefs while secretly harboring pure disbelief."[1]

Ibn al-Jawzī was even more forthright,

"Outwardly they professed Rāfidī beliefs, but inwardly they held pure disbelief. They detested the Sharīʿa, claiming it had both an outer and an inner meaning, and they interpreted all its commands and prohibitions in accordance with their own desires."[2]

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[1] *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ*, vol. 15, p. 151.
[2] *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 99.

Such judgments encompassed all branches of Ismāʿīlism, including the Qarmatiyya and, by extension, the Druze.

**II. The Druze According to Sunni Scholars**

Based on collective scholarly testimony, the Druze sect is classified as an esoteric group outside the fold of Islam due to the following core beliefs:

1. **Rejection of Islamic duties:** There is no obligation to pray, fast, give *zakāt*, or perform pilgrimage.
2. **Belief in reincarnation (*tanāsukh*):** This doctrine contradicts explicit Qur'anic verses affirming resurrection, judgment, Paradise, and Hell.
3. **Deification of al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh:** They believe him to be a manifestation of the Divine in human form.
4. **Concealment of doctrine:** Sacred knowledge is restricted to a privileged class of initiates known as *ʿuqqāl*.
5. **Disavowal of all Muslims:** They maintain that those outside their sect are spiritually condemned.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah issued emphatic rulings in this regard,

"These people who are called Nusayris, along with other sects of the Qarmatian Bātinis, are more disbelieving than the Jews and Christians. Indeed, they are more disbelieving than many of the polytheists. Their harm to the Muslims is greater than that of overt enemies such as the Tatars. They are perpetually aligned with the disbelievers among the polytheists and the People of the Book against the Muslims. They are apostates from the religion of Islam—they are not considered Muslims. They do not acknowledge the obligation of fasting during Ramadan, nor the pilgrimage to the Sacred House [Kaʿbah]. They do not uphold the prohibitions

established by God and His Messenger, such as those concerning carrion, wine, and other forbidden matters."[1]

He further added regarding the Druze,

"Likewise, the Druze—they are of the Nusayri sect, and to those who truly understand them, they are even more disbelieving. They deny the resurrection, Paradise, and Hell. They do not affirm the obligations of Islam, nor the lawfulness of what Allah has permitted, nor the unlawfulness of what He has prohibited. They do not observe prayer or fasting, nor any other Islamic duties. They do not forbid immorality or the consumption of wine. In fact, they are among the most misguided of people."[2]

This verdict was echoed and affirmed by other notable scholars such as al-Dhahabī, Ibn al-Qayyim, al-Shātibī, al-Suyūtī, and others.

## III. The Position of Ihsān Ilāhī Zahīr

Dr. Ihsān Ilāhī Zahīr stands as one of the most prominent contemporary scholars who critically addressed esoteric sects, dedicating considerable analysis to the Druze in works such as *al-Bāṭiniyya*, *al-Bahā'iyya*, and *al-Ismā'īliyya*.[3]

Zahīr warned that the threat posed by the Druze could, in certain contexts, rival even that of Zionism, precisely because they live among Muslims while concealing animosity and unbelief beneath layers of secrecy and isolation.

## IV. The rule regarding the "Ignorant" and the "Initiated"

Some may ask whether such rulings extend to every individual within the Druze community, including those unaware of the creed's inner workings.

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[1] *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, vol. 35, pp. 149–150.
[2] Ibid., pp. 161–162.
[3] See *al-Ismā'īliyya: Tārīkh wa 'Aqā'id,* pp. 722-733.

Scholars differentiate between:

- **Judgment upon the sect:** This is based on doctrinal deviation and is categorical.
- **Judgment upon individuals:** This considers ignorance, misinterpretation, and coercion. Individuals are invited to the truth through wisdom and clarity.

Nevertheless, whoever is proven to know the sect's creed, believe in it, and defend it, then he takes on its ruling regarding apostasy and departure from the faith, as established by the scholars.

**V. Are the Druze Muslims?**

According to the theological framework of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah, the answer is unequivocal: no, the Druze are not Muslims. They do not belong to the ummah of Islam nor fall within the parameters of the People of the Qibla. Islamic laws regarding marriage, inheritance, ritual slaughter, and burial do not apply to them.

Nevertheless, the obligation remains to invite them to guidance, clarify the falsehood of their creed, and warn against their esoteric ideology—not with injustice or hostility, but with firmness in creed and mercy in approach.

Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized that Muslims are duty-bound either to guide them to the straight path, or treat them as disbelievers and apostates as appropriate.

**Conclusion**

The stance of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah regarding the Druze is not rooted in personal bias or sectarian hostility. It is a scholarly position derived from careful study of doctrine, consistency between words and deeds, and methodical comparison of creedal

sources. Islam's judgments are never based on mere suspicion or accusations—they rest upon evidence and proof.

It is firmly established that the Druze creed—both in its foundations and expressions—lies outside the boundaries of Islam. The monotheism it claims is not the monotheism taught by prophets, but a theological construct that denies prophetic revelation and redefines religion according to esoteric abstraction.

In the next chapter, we shall trace the historical trajectory of the Druze, exploring how these beliefs manifested in political and military stances—from the Fātimid era through the invasions of the Levant, the Crusades, and into the Ottoman period.

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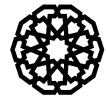
- al-Shātibī, *al-Iʿtisām*
  Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*

# The Political and Military History of the Druze Sect



# 5

## Geographic Dispersion and the Construction of Local Identity

After the roots of the Druze creed had entrenched themselves in a theology of divine embodiment and secrecy, this esoteric movement began its geographic expansion in search of safe havens that could ensure its survival and shield it from rejection and suspicion. The emergence of the Druze as a distinct religious sect was not a sudden rupture, but rather the outcome of layered theological, political, and organizational evolutions. Its geographic stage was Bilād al-Shām, particularly the mountainous regions of Lebanon and the southern plains of Syria.

### I. Retreat from Egypt to Greater Syria

With the decline of the Fātimid state and the waning of Ismāʿīlī influence in Egypt, the ideological incubator for the Druze invitation collapsed. Given the Druze doctrine's extreme positions—especially its deification of al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh—it became a threat even to its former allies. Consequently, the Druze began to migrate northward, carrying with them their secret theological legacy and doctrinal manuscripts, seeking sanctuary and isolation.

The southern Lebanese mountains, with their rugged and inaccessible terrain, proved ideal for the practice of their rites far from the gaze of authorities and religious scholars. From there, they

expanded into Jabal al-Druze (Mount Druze) in southern Syria, limited areas in the Upper Galilee of northern Palestine, and select villages in Hawrān in northeastern Jordan.[1]

## II. Geography as a Doctrinal and Political Refuge

The Druze intentionally settled in geographically challenging regions for two principal reasons:

1. **Protection from doctrinal infiltration:** The isolation offered by mountainous terrain made it difficult for Sunni preachers and scholars to reach them or engage in theological refutation.
2. **Enabling of local autonomy:** These secluded areas allowed them to impose their unique social and political

[1] The Druze community in Jordan is spread across various regions, but their most prominent concentrations are found in the following areas:

**Azraq (Eastern Azraq District)**

- Considered the main center of the Druze in Jordan, locally known as "Druze Azraq."
- The Druze settled there in the early 20th century, especially after the Great Syrian Revolt.
- It includes the Bani Ma'arouf Diwan and is regarded as the social and spiritual heart of the sect in the kingdom.

**Umm al-Quttein (Mafraq Governorate)**

- A town located in northeastern Jordan, near the Syrian border.
- Historically part of Jabal al-Arab before the Sykes–Picot Agreement.
- Home to prominent Druze families such as the Safadi and Al-Barayhi.

**The Capital, Amman**

- Druze communities are present in areas such as Al-Jabal al-Akhdar, Marka District, and some neighborhoods of Zarqa and Ruseifa.
- They gradually relocated there since the founding of the Emirate, particularly from Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine.

**Other Areas**

- **Wadi al-Sirhan**: Some Druze families from Jabal al-Arab settled here.
- **Ajloun**: Small Druze clusters are found in the northern highlands.
- **Aqaba**: A number of Druze families live in the southern coastal city.

order rooted in "Uqqāl's rule," with leadership passed down through founding families.

This geographic seclusion facilitated the construction of a distinct Druze identity—not only religious but also social and cultural. They prohibited intermarriage with outsiders, refused to admit non-Druze into their faith regardless of intent, and developed an internal caste system distinguishing between the ***ʿuqqāl*** (initiates) and the ***juhhāl*** (uninitiated), forbidding the latter from accessing religious texts or doctrinal details.

## III. Formation of Druze Identity in the Mountains

The Druze did not merely seek geographic isolation; they constructed a tightly closed and cohesive social system to safeguard their creed and resist assimilation. Several factors contributed to this:

- **Exclusive endogamy:** Marriage within the community only, with absolute refusal to admit outsiders, regardless of desire.
- **Organizational secrecy:** Religious texts are exclusively entrusted to the *ʿuqqāl* and strictly prohibited from public reading, copying, or distribution.
- **Belief in reincarnation (*tanāsukh*):** Death is not considered a finality but a transition to another body, reinforcing internal loyalty and collective identity.

Over time, this identity evolved into a quasi-political entity capable of forging alliances, waging wars, and determining loyalty and enmity within a framework of sectarian solidarity.

## IV. Relationship with Surrounding Sunni Communities

From the moment Druze communities took root in the mountains, their relationship with surrounding Sunni populations

was marked by mutual apprehension. Scholars of Greater Syria openly rejected Druze doctrines and warned against their theological and political influence. Nevertheless, certain historical moments witnessed pragmatic alliances or temporary partnerships, especially in confronting foreign invasions or regional threats.

Despite these instances, the Druze remained steadfast in their refusal to assimilate into the broader Islamic society, preserving their religious, social, and political separation. At times, they presented themselves merely as "mountain folk" rather than a religious sect—an evasion of doctrinal scrutiny.

**V. Symbols of Local Leadership**

This period witnessed the emergence of Druze leadership figures who consolidated the sect's mountainous identity and administered their territories. Among the most prominent:

- **The Jumblatt family** in Jabal al-Shouf, combining political leadership with doctrinal influence.
- **The Arslan family**, rivals of the Jumblatts for mountain leadership, engaging in local political disputes.
- **Shaykh Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī II**, who will be discussed in a separate chapter for his major role in regional expansion and military campaigns.

As we shall see, these families gradually transformed from local chieftains into regional powers capable of negotiating with the Ottomans and forming alliances or waging conflicts with fellow princes.

**Conclusion**

The phase of geographic dispersion and identity formation represented the foundational moment for the Druze's social and political presence. The sect evolved from a persecuted esoteric

group into an insular mountain-based community with the means for survival, semi-autonomy, and cautious engagement with surrounding powers.

This phase laid the groundwork for the Druze's subsequent trajectory across centuries, in confrontations with the Crusaders, the Mamluks, and the Ottomans, as well as in forging distinctive political alliances—topics to be explored in the following chapters.



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# 6

## Ethnic Origins and the Spread of the Druze in Bilād al-Shām

The Druze presence in Bilād al-Shām (Greater Syria) is tied to the emergence of their esoteric doctrine under the Fatimid Caliphate, particularly during the reign of al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (386–411 AH / 996–1021 CE), who was regarded by them as a divine manifestation. Initially, the daʿwah (missionary call) appeared in Egypt, but it was swiftly rejected by a broad spectrum of Muslims—both Sunnis and even mainstream Ismaʿilis within the Fatimid ranks. Consequently, the Druze missionaries sought more fertile ground to propagate their secretive and radical creed, eventually turning toward Syria.

**Were the Druze a Migrant People from Egypt?**

Historical evidence suggests that the Druze did not migrate in groups from Egypt to Syria. Rather, it was primarily their missionaries who made the journey, most notably: Hamza ibn ʿAlī al-Zūzanī, Ismāʿīl al-Tamīmī, and Muhammad ibn Wahb al-Qurashī. These figures targeted mountainous regions in Bilād al-Shām—areas known for their sectarian diversity or alienation from central political-religious authority.

The movement was rejected in Egypt early on. The missionary al-Darazī (after whom the sect was—somewhat misleadingly—

named, though Druze themselves dislike him) was killed, and the remaining missionaries fled. The mountainous regions of Syria and Lebanon offered them a safe haven, often lying beyond the effective control of the central state.

**Who Were the First Converts in the Levant?**

According to historical sources, the earliest adherents to the Druze doctrine in the Levant were local populations—particularly in *Jabal al-Summaq* in northern Syria (modern-day Idlib governorate), and later in Mount Lebanon and Jabal al-ʿArab. Their conversion was not always theological; it was sometimes motivated by local loyalties or the desire for protection via a secretive sect that could shield them from the dominant political-religious systems.[1]

Many historians suggest that Yemeni-origin tribes such as *Āl Tanūkh* and *Āl Maʿn* in Mount Lebanon were among the first to adopt the Druze faith, indicating that the sect was more of an ideological transformation of local Levantine populations rather than a transplanted foreign group.[2]

**The Non-Ethnic Character of the Sect**

Unlike many religious communities, the Druze are not a uniform ethnic group. They are a mix of Levantine Arabs, Yemeni tribes (some exiled to the Levant during the Abbasid era), and local populations of Aramean or Syriac origin who converted later. There are also indications that some Turks joined Druze communities in Mount Lebanon during the Mamluk period.

Scholar **S.D. Goitein** notes that one of the key reasons for the Druze daʿwah's spread in the Levant was the fragmentation of Islamic sects and the political upheavals of the time, which led

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[1] See: Nadim Nayif Hamza, *al-Tanukhūyūn the Ancestors of the Druze and their Rules in Mt. Lebanon*. Dar al-Nahar: Beirut, 1984, pp. 67-68.
[2] Wikipedia: Tanukh

certain groups to seek independent religious identities. This made Mount Lebanon and southern Syria fertile ground for the Druze creed.[1]

### A Doctrinal, Not Demographic, Transformation

The adoption of the Druze creed was not due to mass migration, but rather due to secretive missionary activity that succeeded in converting local communities. Historian **Kamal Salibi** observes that most Druze in Lebanon and Syria today descend from the indigenous population of those regions, who "changed their religious skin" during the medieval period—not migrants, but local converts to an esoteric doctrine.[2]

### Why the Mountains?

The concentration of Druze in mountainous areas (Jabal al-Druze, Mount Lebanon, Jabal al-Summaq) reflects a functional link between their creed and closed geography. A secretive religion cannot thrive in open cities or cosmopolitan societies—hence, the mountains were a strategic choice. This geography later contributed to the Druze community's isolationist character and allowed them to survive across centuries despite their separation from broader Islamic society.[3]

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[1] S.D. Goitein, "The Origins of the Druze People and Religion," *Studia Islamica*, *No. 26* (1967), pp. 55–84.

[2] Kamal Salibi, A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered, London: I.B. Tauris, 1988, pp. 94–96.

[3] Hasan al-Amīn, ibid., pp. 56–59.

# 7

## The Druze in the Era of the Crusades and Mongol Invasions

As the bells of the Crusades echoed across the Levant, the Druze community had already begun entrenching its presence in the mountains stretching from the Shouf region to Mount Hawrān. Its religious and social identity had crystallized in ways that distinguished it from the surrounding Islamic milieu. These events—the Crusader and Mongol invasions—were not merely tests of military resilience, but decisive moments for defining loyalties, stances, and identity.

### I. The Druze and the Crusades

Neither Islamic nor Western historical sources point to any significant or organized Druze involvement in fighting against the Crusaders, despite their geographic proximity to key battlefronts. While Sunni Muslims were actively engaged in defending Jerusalem and the Levant—from Nūr al-Dīn Zengī to Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī—Druze participation remained minimal and, at times, a source of suspicion among Muslim chroniclers.

Some accounts even suggest that Druze leaders in Mount Lebanon adopted a stance of neutrality or tactical alignment with the Crusaders, seeking to preserve their mountain autonomy and fend off external interference. Their doctrinal ambiguity and social

seclusion likely influenced this choice, especially in contrast to participation in a unifying Islamic project.

Ibn Taymiyyah explicitly criticized this stance, stating:

"They [i.e., the Druze] are always aligned with every enemy of the Muslims; they side with the Christians against the Muslims. Among the greatest calamities in their eyes is the Muslims' conquest of the coastal regions and the defeat of the Christians. In fact, one of the gravest disasters for them is the Muslims' victory over the Tatars."[1]

Such statements reflect the perception that the Druze of his time did not actively oppose the Crusaders and were instead aligned with them, provoking strong condemnation from Sunni scholars who viewed this as a betrayal of faith and communal loyalty.

**II. During the Mongol Invasions**

When the Mongol armies swept into Iraq and the Levant in the 7th century AH, history posed another heavy question: where did the sects stand? As with the Crusades, the historical record notes little, if any, military engagement from the Druze against the invading Mongols.

In fact, some historians indicate that Druze regions were not direct targets for the Mongol invasions and that their mountainous territories were spared from conflict. As such, the Druze again opted for seclusion and neutrality, carefully observing the balance of power before committing to any position. The newly emerging Mamluk state—spearheading the defense of Islam in the famous Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt in 1260 CE—did not consider the Druze a reliable ally or military partner.

Tensions between the Druze and the Mamluks occasionally flared, especially under Sultan Baybars, who sought to consolidate

[1] *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, vol. 35, pp. 150-151 and beyond.

central authority over all local powers, including the Druze leadership in the mountains.

## III. Underlying Motives and Doctrinal Background

The cautious or neutral Druze positions during these critical episodes can be attributed to a variety of factors:

1. **Esoteric belief structure:** Their secretive doctrine does not frame the Islamic ummah as a unified whole, but rather distinguishes between "those who know" and the general masses, which diminished their identification with broader Muslim concerns.
2. **Preservation of local autonomy:** Maintaining their mountain enclave took precedence over risky external entanglements or costly warfare.
3. **Absence of a unifying Islamic vision:** The Druze lacked a comprehensive Islamic framework and often viewed Sunni rule as a potential threat to their existence—on par with Crusader or Mongol threats.

## IV. Responses from Sunni Scholars

Sunni scholars did not remain neutral regarding Druze ambivalence or alignment with adversaries. Ibn Taymiyyah categorized the Druze alongside other sects he deemed outside the fold of Islam, famously statin,

"These Druze and Nusayris are disbelievers by the consensus of the Muslims. It is not permissible to eat their slaughtered animals. Even if they outwardly proclaim the two testimonies of faith, their beliefs render them disbelievers by unanimous agreement of the Muslims. They are among the Qarmatian Bātinis, who are more disbelieving than the Jews, the Christians, and the polytheists of the Arabs."[1]

[1] *Fatawā Shaykh al-Islām fi al-Nusayriyyah wa al-Durūz*, p. 79.

He issued rulings that permitted fighting against them, barred them from public office, and prohibited consumption of their slaughtered meat. In his view, they revealed only the name of Islam while concealing beliefs antithetical to the core of Islamic monotheism and law.

This position arose from a clear analysis of their behavior during those decisive junctures—particularly their alliances with the Crusaders and Mongols, which scholars saw as evidence of opposing the faith during critical trials.

**V. Consequences and Legacy**

The Druze refusal to engage actively against the Crusader and Mongol invasions left a lasting imprint on their historical image within the Islamic conscious. Many scholars and chroniclers regarded them as an insular sect with ambiguous loyalties and hesitant positions in times of crisis.

This perception contributed to further isolation from the broader Muslim society, reinforcing public and scholarly wariness—an image that would persist well into the Ottoman period.

The era of the Crusader and Tatar invasions served as a true moment of reckoning, revealing the stances of various groups. During this time, the Druze emerged as a local force that chose isolation, neutrality, or even accommodation with the enemies of the Muslims, in order to preserve their own existence. This was not a mere coincidence, but rather the product of a particular creed, historical trajectory, and a closed social structure—factors that would later shape their political roles in subsequent eras.

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# 8

## From Sectarian Isolation to Regional Power: Fakhr al-Dīn II and the Rise of Druze Influence

After centuries of isolation and withdrawal in the mountainous regions of the Shouf and Hawrān, the Druze began to emerge as an influential local political force, especially with the rise of Emir Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī II in the seventeenth century CE. This phase marked a notable turning point: a once esoteric and secretive sect transformed into a quasi-autonomous power exercising governance, forging alliances with Western powers, and confronting Ottoman central authority. What enabled such a shift? And what role did European influence play?

### I. Emir Fakhr al-Dīn II: Biography and Vision

Born in 1572 CE, Fakhr al-Dīn II belonged to the illustrious Maʿn family, a Druze dynasty that ruled parts of Mount Lebanon as Ottoman-appointed emirs of the Shouf region. Yet Fakhr al-Dīn aspired to far more than provincial administration—he sought political independence, the construction of a powerful Druze-led entity, and openness to the West.

What distinguished Fakhr al-Dīn was:

- His diplomatic acumen

- His ambition to unify Mount Lebanon's sects under his authority
- His pursuit of political sovereignty apart from the Sublime Porte

**II. Alliance with Western Powers**

In a bold and unprecedented move for the region, Fakhr al-Dīn forged a strategic alliance with the Duchy of Tuscany, Italy. He exchanged envoys, dispatched delegations, and established diplomatic relations with European states. The aim was clear: to leverage Western support against Ottoman interference and curb imperial control over his expanding power base.

As part of this alliance, he received military aid, European engineers, and modern weaponry. He began fortifying his strongholds and extended his reach across Mount Lebanon to Baalbek, the Beqaa Valley, Sidon, and even northern Palestine.

A contemporary Western scholar remarked:

"Fakhr al-Dīn embodied the first attempt at local independence in Mount Lebanon—an initiative that intersected with European interests and served long-term colonial ambitions."[1]

But why Did Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī seek an Alliance with Tuscany?

The alliance between Fakhr al-Dīn II al-Maʿnī and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in the early seventeenth century emerged from a convergence of political interests, strategic ambitions, and regional dynamics that created fertile ground for opposition to Ottoman authority. At a time when the Levant was under firm Ottoman control, Fakhr al-Dīn—an astute and ambitious Druze

[1] See, *Sectarianism, Identity and Conflict in the Middle East,* Michael C. Hudson, Editor.

emir—sought to assert his autonomy and expand his rule beyond the confines of Mount Lebanon.

Fakhr al-Dīn found himself constrained by the Ottoman system of tax farming (*iltizām*), which treated local rulers as mere administrators rather than sovereigns. His aspirations to extend his influence into Damascus, Palestine, and southern Syria brought him into direct conflict with Ottoman governors, particularly the powerful *vālī* of Damascus. As his territorial ambitions met with resistance, Fakhr al-Dīn recognized the need for an external ally—a European power that could provide military and political support. Tuscany, with its own Mediterranean ambitions, appeared to be the ideal partner.

At the time, Grand Duke Ferdinando I de' Medici was pursuing an expansionist policy aimed at increasing Tuscan influence in the eastern Mediterranean. His strategic objectives included:

- Challenging Ottoman dominance along the Levantine coast;
- Establishing a permanent maritime and political presence in the region;
- Creating footholds in Syria and Palestine that could serve as staging grounds for further Christian influence.

Tuscany viewed Fakhr al-Dīn as a promising regional ally—an independent-minded leader who could undermine Ottoman control from within. For Fakhr al-Dīn, the relationship promised not only military aid, but international legitimacy and a gateway to the broader Christian world.

In 1608, Fakhr al-Dīn signed a secret agreement with Tuscany that outlined:

- The dispatch of an Italian military mission to Lebanon to train his forces;

- The supply of cannons, firearms, and ammunition;
- Technical support in fortification building, particularly at strategic sites such as Qalʿat al-Shuqayf (Beaufort Castle);
- Potential logistical and naval support should he rise openly against the Ottomans.

As part of the agreement, Italian military engineers arrived in Lebanon to construct and reinforce defensive structures—marking a significant evolution in the emir's military capabilities.

While Tuscany was a Catholic state and Fakhr al-Dīn a Druze leader, pragmatic politics overshadowed theological differences. The alliance fit neatly within Tuscan aspirations of launching a "new crusade"—albeit a political and maritime one—against the Ottomans. Fakhr al-Dīn, in turn, leveraged the alliance to open diplomatic channels with the Vatican and other Catholic powers such as France, enhancing his standing as a legitimate and formidable regional authority.

The alliance significantly strengthened Fakhr al-Dīn's political and military position for over a decade. However, it also alarmed the Ottoman administration, which perceived the collaboration as a direct threat. In 1613, the Ottomans dispatched an expedition under Ahmed Pasha al-Küçük to suppress Fakhr al-Dīn's growing power. Facing imminent defeat, he fled to Tuscany, where he lived in Florence from 1613 to 1618, hosted by the very court with which he had forged his alliance.

This episode became a historical precedent, symbolizing the potential of Levantine local powers to engage with European states for mutual gain—and underscoring the fragility of Ottoman control in its Arab provinces. The Fakhr al-Dīn–Tuscany alliance would echo in later centuries as European interest in the Levant grew ever deeper.

## III. Confrontation with the Ottoman State

Naturally, the Ottoman Empire did not tolerate such ambitions. Fakhr al-Dīn, once a loyal Druze governor, had become a threat to imperial unity. In 1613 CE, a military campaign led by the governor of Damascus, Ahmed Küçük Pasha, forced Fakhr al-Dīn into exile in Europe.

Ironically, this exile became a "learning expedition" as he resided in Tuscany, studied modern administrative and military systems, and returned to Lebanon in 1618 CE with renewed determination, empowered by foreign expertise.

His project continued until 1635 CE, when—after a prolonged siege—he was captured and executed in Damascus by order of Sultan Murad IV.[1]

## IV. The Lasting Impact of Fakhr al-Dīn's Project

Despite his tragic end, Fakhr al-Dīn's endeavor left enduring effects:

1. Consolidated the Druze as a regional political power in Mount Lebanon and the Shouf
2. Catalyzed local consciousness around autonomy and secession from the Ottoman state—a legacy inherited by future Druze leadership
3. Introduced European influence into Lebanon—a precursor to direct French intervention in the 19th century
4. Reshaped the region's sectarian alliances, as Fakhr al-Dīn courted Christian sects, notably the Maronites, in his anti-

[1] See Fakhr al-Din II - Wikipedia.

Ottoman project—laying the groundwork for later sectarian complexities in the mountain

## V. Druze–Western Relations: The Beginnings of a Strategic Partnership

Western powers—particularly Italy and France—saw the Druze as a useful instrument for undermining Ottoman dominance. This perception later played into:

- Support for missionary activity under the guise of minority protection
- Justification for European interference in Druze-Maronite conflicts
- Advocacy for local autonomy schemes at the expense of centralized Ottoman rule

Importantly, Druze–Western relations were rooted in political interests, not religious alignment. The Druze did not adopt Christianity nor exhibit theological affinity with the West, but rather viewed Western alliance as a pragmatic military and political shield against internal and external threats.

## VI. Islamic Critique of the Druze–Western Alliance

From the standpoint of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah, alliances between esoteric sects and Western powers against the Islamic state have been historically and theologically condemned. Such alliances are classified as impermissible acts of loyalty to the enemies of God. Scholars have interpreted them as betrayals of the ummah and deviations from legitimate allegiances.

## Conclusion

The rise of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī II marked a pivotal transformation in Druze history—from a secluded sect to a political power-seeking recognition on the world stage. Their alliance with

the West initiated a series of strategic relationships with foreign powers that would reemerge at key junctures in the histories of the Levant and Lebanon.

Thus, Druze history moved beyond the confines of sectarianism to become a shaping force in the political geography of the region.

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# 9

## The Druze During the Mutasarrifiyyah and the French Mandate: From Rebellion to Sectarian Balance

In the mid-nineteenth century, Mount Lebanon entered a new phase of political and social transformation following a series of violent clashes between Druze and Christians—particularly the Maronites—which culminated in the massacres of 1860. In response, European powers, led by France, intervened and brokered a new administrative system known as the Mutasarrifiyyah (1861–1915). This marked a critical juncture in the Druze historical narrative: a moment suspended between marginalization and adaptation, between the erosion of traditional dominance and the effort to safeguard regional influence.

### I. The 1860 Sectarian Conflict: The Druze Face Europe

The 1860 civil strife erupted between Druze and Christians (primarily Maronites) across Mount Lebanon and the Beqaa Valley amid longstanding sectarian tensions and foreign interventions. France assumed the mantle of "protector of the Maronites," while the Ottoman Empire officially positioned itself as a mediator, though some of its administrative bodies leaned toward curbing the Druze.

This crisis climaxed in direct French military involvement under the banner of defending the Christians, significantly weakening the Druze's political standing and raising the larger questions: Has the Druze political era come to an end? And has the Western agenda succeeded in diminishing their historical weight?

## II. The Mutasarrifiyyah System: Marginalization or Fragile Balance?

In 1861, with international backing, the Mutasarrifiyyah was established as a semi-autonomous administrative unit. It stipulated that Mount Lebanon would be governed by a Christian (non-Lebanese) governor appointed by the Ottoman Sultan and approved by European powers. A meticulous sectarian distribution of administrative posts was set in place:

- Maronites received the majority of governmental roles
- Druze were allocated a smaller share, reflecting their political setback post-1860
- Seats on the "Administrative Council" were apportioned among Maronites, Druze, and other groups

Despite this apparent regression, the Druze retained their influence in regions like the Shouf, Rashaya, and Hasbayya. They capitalized on their strategic geography and economic networks to maintain a delicate balance with Christian counterparts.

## III. The Rise of Druze Leadership and Strategic Repositioning

Throughout the Mutasarrifiyyah period, a new generation of Druze leaders emerged, intent on:

- Preserving internal cohesion and shielding the community from missionary and Christian encroachment

- Building alliances with Sunni and Shiite leaders in the Beqaa and Hawrān regions
- Engaging the Ottoman authorities with calculated pragmatism, without compromising Druze identity

Among the most notable figures were Saʿīd Jumblatt and Nasīb Bey Jumblatt, who pioneered a new political tradition based on diplomacy over militancy and economic leverage over confrontation.

**IV. The French Occupation and Greater Syria: From Revolution to Containment**

Following World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the French entered Lebanon and Syria, fragmenting the region into sectarian mini-states. The Druze community, led by Sultan Pasha al-Atrash, stood firmly against this scheme and spearheaded the Great Syrian Revolt (1925–1927) against the French Mandate, with Druze strongholds in Jabal al-ʿArab serving as the epicenter of resistance.

Conversely, in Greater Lebanon, which France established in 1920, French authorities attempted to pacify the Druze by offering political representation and local guarantees. As a result, the Druze became a measured force in the Lebanese equation—neither dominant nor marginalized, but rather a "third player" whose influence could not be ignored.

**V. Analytical Reflection: From Defiance to Equilibrium**

What explains the Druze transformation—from a Western adversary in Syria to a political partner in Lebanon?

The Druze transformation—from fierce anti-colonial rebels in Syria to accepted political partners in Lebanon—can be understood as a product of calculated pragmatism, rooted in a long tradition of mountain politics and adaptive leadership. Having shifted from

outright defiance to strategic negotiation, Druze leaders displayed a sophisticated grasp of regional power dynamics, capitalizing on their unique identity to secure localized autonomy. Their ability to navigate the shifting tides of Western colonial interests, while maintaining communal cohesion, earned them a recognized place in Lebanon's emerging political system.

## VI. The Islamic Perspective on This Period

From the standpoint of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah:

- The Druze's engagement in the 1860 sectarian conflict and their subsequent cooperation with French occupiers in certain areas warrants theological censure
- However, their alignment with Sultan al-Atrash in resisting French colonial rule is regarded as a noble stance—despite doctrinal ambiguities

## Conclusion

During this transformative period, the Druze succeeded in maintaining political relevance despite sweeping regional upheavals. They transitioned from insurrection and opposition to partnership and equilibrium. Nevertheless, their esoteric creed and Western ties continued to provoke questions among Islamic historians, making any comprehensive reading of this era incomplete without incorporating both doctrinal and geopolitical perspectives.



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# The Druze in the Modern Era

# 10

## The Druze in Lebanon: From Civil Wars to Sectarian Principalities

Since the founding of independent Lebanon in 1943, the Druze have entered a new phase of political adaptation, engaging with a state built on a meticulously sectarian framework known as the *National Pact*. After centuries of doctrinal secrecy and theological ambiguity, they found themselves as official stakeholders within the fabric of the modern Lebanese state—a radical transformation that necessitated redefining their relationship with society and authority while retaining their historical legacy and esoteric identity.

Lebanon, particularly its rugged mountainous regions like the Shouf, has long served as a stage for the evolution of the Druze political psyche—marked by military consolidation, shifting alliances, rebellions, and even massacres. Here, the Druze political persona morphed from withdrawal to dominance, from neutrality to tacit complicity, and from *taqiyya* (dissimulation) to open assertion. Their journey reveals the singularity of the Druze experience within a deeply sectarian state governed more by political balances than by principles, and driven by interests more than doctrines.

## I. Historical Roots: The Maʿn and Shihāb Dynasties

During the 16th and 17th centuries, local emirates emerged under Ottoman suzerainty, most notably the Maʿn dynasty led by Druze emirs—chief among them Fakhr al-Dīn II. With the assistance of European allies, especially the Italians, Fakhr al-Dīn extended his authority over much of Bilād al-Shām and spent time in Florence. His expansionist ambitions led to direct conflict with the Ottoman state, which ultimately ended his rule and executed him in 1635 CE.

This was followed by the Shihāb dynasty (initially Sunni, later Christian), which marked a gradual shift of authority from the Druze to the Maronites, though Druze influence remained dominant—especially in mountain strongholds like the Shouf.

## II. Sectarian Conflict with the Maronites

In the 19th century, tensions between Druze and Maronite Christians escalated into widespread violence across Mount Lebanon, culminating in the 1860 massacres that claimed thousands of lives. Towns such as Deir al-Qamar, Zahleh, and Sidon witnessed significant bloodshed, prompting French military intervention under the pretext of Christian protection.

While this intervention curbed immediate violence, it planted the seed for European sectarian patronage in Lebanon and established the concept of "protected communities"—a precedent the Druze would later exploit by fortifying their own military-sectarian identity in response to external pressures.

## III. Consolidation of Druze Leadership

With the proclamation of "Greater Lebanon" by General Gouraud in 1920 under French Mandate, the Druze Mountain was annexed to the newly formed state. The Druze, feeling sidelined in

the emergent sectarian order despite their historical significance, sought political placement within the newly drawn map.

Leadership alternated between the Arslan and Jumblatt families, each vying to represent the Druze, with diverging stances toward France and Arab causes.

In modern Lebanon, the Jumblatt family[1] emerged as the embodiment of Druze political adaptability, transitioning from insular sectarianism to calculated national engagement.

Kamāl Jumblatt spearheaded the Druze modernization project from the mid-20th century, founding the Progressive Socialist Party and embedding Druze identity within a socialist, Arab nationalist framework open to leftist movements. As a philosopher and reformist, he co-founded the Lebanese National Movement and strived to balance Druze identity with civic activism. After his assassination in 1977, his son Walīd Jumblatt inherited leadership, embracing a highly pragmatic political style—switching alliances as needed and maintaining Druze representation in parliament and cabinet.

Eventually, the Arslan family's influence waned, leaving the Jumblatts as the sole Druze power brokers within and beyond state institutions. Their leadership style, however, was rife with contradictions: publicly advocating secularism and reform while perpetuating rigid sectarian patronage, turning the Shouf into a

[1] It is likely that the name "Jumblatt" (Junblāt) has Turkish origins, composed of two words: "Can," meaning "soul" or "life," and "Polat," meaning "steel" or "iron." Thus, the name would mean "Soul of Steel" or "Iron-hearted"—a heroic-style designation that was common during the Ottoman era. It is said that the family's founding ancestor was known as "Can Polat," who entered Mount Lebanon in the 17th century—either from Aleppo or Anatolia—and was connected to Emir Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī II. The name later evolved in local dialects into "Jumblatt."

Druze "principality" governed by entrenched networks and identity politics wrapped in civil discourse.

## IV. The Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990)

During Lebanon's civil war, the Druze played a major military role within the Lebanese National Movement. Walīd Jumblatt aligned with the Palestinians, then with the Syrians, later shifting allegiances. The war witnessed several atrocities, notably the massacres of Sidon and al-Shahhār al-Gharbī, leading to the infamous 1983 Mountain Massacre, in which Druze forces targeted Maronites following the withdrawal of Kataeb militias after the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the Shouf, Aliya and Baabda.

These events led to the mass displacement of tens of thousands of Christians from the Shouf and the transformation of the region into a Druze-dominated enclave ruled with an iron grip by the Progressive Socialist Party. This consolidation came with widespread destruction of villages and churches, and the imposition of a new sectarian reality by force.

It is worth noting that the massacres were not one-sided; rather, this civil war witnessed mutual massacres between the sects, including some committed against the Druze as well—such as the Shams Massacre and the Barouk Massacre.[1]

## V. Relations with the Syrian Regime and Israel

After the war, the Druze cultivated close ties with the Syrian regime, offering political loyalty in exchange for preserving their leadership. Simultaneously, they opened unofficial channels with

[1] For a more detailed account of the massacres and violations that occurred during the Mountain War, particularly in 1983, see: Makram Riachi, *The Conflict over Mount Lebanon*; Bernadette Schenk, *Kamal Jumblatt: The Arab-Islamic Heritage and the Role of the Druze in His Vision of Lebanese History*.

Israel—through local figures—positioning themselves as "trusted sectarian intermediaries" in any future settlement.

Notably, some Druze leaders openly supported Syrian occupation of Lebanon and used it to further solidify internal dominance.

## VI. Post-Taʾif: Entrenched Influence

Following the Taʾif Agreement of 1989, Lebanon entered a fragile peace, yet Druze influence remained intact. Their role was redefined within the sectarian system, maintaining their "kingmaker" status in government formation. The Jumblatts monopolized Druze representation and controlled appointments, judiciary, education, and resources in their regions.

Walīd Jumblatt became emblematic of sectarian pragmatism—supporting Hezbollah's Iranian-backed arms, then opposing them, then rejoining forces, depending on regional shifts.

## VII. Their Position on Arab and Islamic Causes

The modern Druze stance has been characterized by ambiguity and hesitation:

- Verbally supporting the Palestinian cause while field behavior during the civil war ranged from backing resistance to collaborating with Israeli forces
- Taking a cautious approach to the Syrian revolution, with Druze in Suweyda divided between loyalty to the regime and tentative support for opposition groups
- Prioritizing "sectarian interests" and "Lebanese specificity," distancing themselves from broader Islamic concerns

Kamāl Jumblatt once stated:

"We do not wish to return to the past, but rather to create a new society—one that grants human beings their dignity, awareness, and rightful existence."[1]

This reflects a controlled secularism that favors inward-looking reform over ideological commitments.

## VIII. Western Role and the History of Protection

Understanding the Druze's modern position requires recalling Western involvement in their protection and strategic deployment:

- They received British backing against French-supported Maronites
- Adopted secular-modernist rhetoric to distinguish themselves from other Muslim sects
- Were viewed by some Western policymakers as "useful local partners" in partition or communal management schemes

The Druze have expertly leveraged this ambiguity to safeguard their existence and perpetuate their leadership.

## IX. Recent Stances and Opposition to the New Syrian State

In 2025, with the fall of the Assad regime, the positions of both regional and internal forces became increasingly clear. While the majority of Sunni and Christian factions in Lebanon expressed their support for the new Syrian state, leading Druze figures—chiefly prominent figures from Mount Lebanon—declared their backing of Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri in his stance rejecting reconciliation with the new authorities in Damascus. This was seen as a continuation of the path of estrangement and rebellion.

[1] Charter of the Progressive Socialist Party.

This coincided with the Israeli bombardment of Damascus on July 16, 2025, further confirming a renewed phase of historical deviation.

To be sure, the Druze scene is far more complex than a simple narrative of collective support or a unified call for Israeli intervention.

Even within Suwayda itself, the Druze leadership was divided over Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri's position. Armed factions such as *Dirʿ al-Tawḥīd* and *Liwāʾ al-Jabal* publicly backed al-Hijri, viewing his stance as a defense of Druze autonomy. In contrast, other groups like the *Karāmah Guesthouse Alliance* led by Laith al-Balaʿūs, and *Aḥrār Jabal al-ʿArab*, expressed support for the new Syrian state and firmly rejected any form of foreign intervention.[1]

This internal fragmentation illustrates the deepening fault lines within the Druze community—between isolationist insurgency and cautious integration—against the backdrop of a volatile regional realignment.

These events revealed that the alliance of this faction of the Druze with the West and Israel was not a circumstantial occurrence, but rather part of a long-standing political project rooted in sectarian exceptionalism and a reliance on foreign powers.

For his part, Walid Jumblatt warned against dragging the Druze community into an open war with the tribes and did not support Israeli intervention. Regardless of the stance of the Lebanese Druze, thrusting the Druze community into such a conflict amid the vast sea of the Sunni Muslim nation will bring them no good. The wise among them know that they stand to lose everything—even if they have the Zionist entity, and indeed the entire West, behind them.

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[1] See *al-Usbūʿ*, https://www.elaosboa.com/2339770/

## Wiam Wahhab's Stance on the Syrian Revolution and the New Government

Wiam Wahhab[1] was one of the most prominent allies of Bashar al-Assad's regime during the years of war, fiercely defending him in both media and political arenas. After the fall of Assad's regime in

[1] **Wiam Wahhab** is a Lebanese politician and media figure from the Druze community. He was born in 1964 in the town of **Jahiliyah** in the Shouf district of Mount Lebanon. He is the founder and leader of the Arab Unification Party (*Hizb al-Tawhid*), which he launched in 2006 after having been one of the figures close to the *Progressive Socialist Party* led by Walid Jumblatt. Wahhab later broke away from the party and took a different political path. He is known for his fiery media appearances and sharp political rhetoric. He is aligned with the "Axis of Resistance" in Lebanon—that is, the bloc allied with Syria, Iran, and Hezbollah. Wahhab has consistently defended the regime of Bashar al-Assad and was one of the most prominent Druze figures to oppose the 2011 Syrian revolution. He repeatedly attacked Druze groups opposing the Syrian regime, both in Lebanon and in Jabal al-ʿArab.

**Positions and Orientation**

- Wahhab is known for his fierce stance against Walid Jumblatt, the traditional leader of the Druze community in Lebanon. He has repeatedly sought to present himself as a political alternative and a "nationalist Druze" not beholden to the West or Saudi Arabia, as he puts it.
- He has close ties with the Syrian regime and leaders of Hezbollah, and he takes part in the media discourse hostile to American and Gulf policies in the region.
- He has run for parliamentary elections multiple times but has never succeeded in securing a permanent seat in Parliament. However, he has a popular base in some villages of the Chouf and Rachaya districts.
- He previously founded the *OTV* channel, and later established *Tawhid TV*, affiliated with his party, to serve as a political platform for himself and his ideological line.

Despite belonging to the Druze sect, Wahhab presents himself as a *"pan-Arab Islamic"* politician. He has adopted a Druze discourse that is open to the Iranian and Syrian axis, placing him at odds with several Druze religious authorities, particularly in al-Suwayda.

Wiam Wahhab is considered one of the most controversial Druze figures, combining populist media tactics with harsh political rhetoric. He has played a marginal yet loud political role, especially within the internal Druze power dynamics, where he seeks to capitalize on the rift between Jumblatt and Bashar al-Assad for his own benefit.

late 2024 and the rise of the new president, Ahmad al-Sharaa, Wahhab adopted a hostile position toward the Sharaa administration, describing it as a "usurper of power" and accusing President Sharaa of being "a coup leader carrying out an American agenda."[1]

Wahhab called for an armed Druze resistance against the new government and even urged for attacks on the presidential palace in Damascus.[2] He announced the formation of a militia called the "Army of Tawhīd," prompting the Syrian judiciary to open a legal case against him on charges of incitement to sedition and armed rebellion.

Within the Lebanese Druze community, reactions to Wahhab's stance were divided—some offered partial support, while others expressed popular and political rejection. Hisham al-Aʿwar, the Secretary-General of the Arab Tawhid Party, stated that Wahhab—party leader—was "fully comfortable with his Druze support," adding that Druze officers had fought bravely in Syria.[3] Some sheikhs in Kfarhim even showed support for him during funeral ceremonies for the victims of Suwayda, according to party statements.[4]

On the other hand, several voices expressed concern and rejection of Lebanese Druze involvement in Syria. At a condolence gathering held in the Chouf region, Walid Jumblatt and a delegation from the Progressive Socialist Party walked out as soon as Wahhab arrived, leaving the venue nearly empty—a move widely interpreted as a strong political message.[5] Jumblatt publicly criticized Wahhab and rejected his calls for intervention in Syria, stating that "the

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[1] https://thawra.sy/?p=677798

[2] "التحريض المسلح"القضاء السوري يلاحق وئام وهاب بتهم ... Arabi21

[3] https://annah.ar/233071

[4] Ibid.

[5] https://www.lebanondebate.com/article/724388

Druze are not border guards." Wahhab responded by saying, "The Druze authority is God and the Five Boundaries of Reason,"[1] implying a claim to Druze independence in decision-making.[2]

## X. Analytical Reflection: A Sectarian Principality Governing from the Margins

Though comprising less than 5.2% of Lebanon's population, the Druze have retained disproportionate political power through firm territorial control, intricate alliance-building, and a strategy of temporary alignment with dominant forces.

Lebanon's sectarian nature has allowed them to entrench behind a closed communal identity, preserving a sense of autonomy and fending off cultural or religious penetration.

They have demonstrated remarkable ability to harness conflict, division, and crisis in service of their sectarian project—even while projecting a façade of openness and civic dialogue. Their experience in Lebanon stands as a microcosmic model of modern "sectarian principalities."

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[1] See Appendix III in this book to know what the Five Boundaries of Reason are.
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# 11

## The Druze in Syria: From Jabal al-ʿArab to the Battle for Identity (2025)

Jabal al-ʿArab, historically known as Jabal al-Druze, represents the religious and political heartland of the Druze community in Syria. It has served as a cradle for local traditions forged under the leadership of Druze spiritual authorities (*Mashāyikh al-ʿAql*) and prominent families like the al-Aṭrash. Situated south of Damascus near the Jordanian border, the mountain became a haven for Druze clans migrating from Lebanon between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Over time, it evolved into a quasi-autonomous enclave, particularly during episodes of central state weakness. The region's rugged terrain provided natural protection, enabling the Druze to preserve their religious and social distinctiveness.

Jabal al-ʿArab is not merely the geographic homeland of the Druze; it has become their strategic core and a platform for their fluctuating political engagement. Since the twilight of Ottoman rule, through the French Mandate and into the Baʿthist era, the Druze role oscillated between rebellion and withdrawal, nationalism and sectarian insularity. Their relative autonomy deepened during the 1920s when France granted them self-rule, planting the seeds for local leaderships with separatist tendencies. Yet this balance remained fragile—until the events of 2025 shattered it. The Druze spiritual establishment turned against Syria's post-Assad

government and opened the door to overt Israeli intervention, marking a dramatic shift in their stance toward the state and nation. The episode exposed a deep-rooted isolationist drive that continues to shape critical decisions within the community.

## I. Historical Foundations: The Druze and French Colonialism

In one of the most defining moments of modern Syrian history, the Druze leader Sultan Pasha al-Atrash led the Great Syrian Revolt against the French occupation in 1925—a popular uprising that emerged from the heart of Jabal al-Druze, which France had already designated as an autonomous entity in 1921 as part of its policy to fragment the Levant into sectarian mini-states (for the Druze, Alawites, Maronites, etc.). This sectarian entity granted the Druze a form of self-rule and expanded the influence of their local leaders, affording them political leverage not available in other regions.

Despite these privileges, Sultan al-Atrash chose to rise above narrow sectarian identity and lead a comprehensive national revolution. Sparked by a French assault on his home in al-Suwayda, the revolt quickly spread to Damascus, its surrounding Ghouta, and Hauran, evolving into a broad resistance movement that confronted superior French military power. While it was not an exclusively Druze uprising, it drew participation from Muslims in Damascus, Daraa, Hama, and other regions. The revolt was eventually crushed with brutal force, yet it left behind a legacy of national unity that is still admired today, making al-Atrash a symbol of inclusive patriotism.

However, the Druze community did not sustain this revolutionary path for long. It soon withdrew inward, adopting a strategy of "armed neutrality" in subsequent stages of Syrian history. This reversion to isolationist tendencies eventually paved

the way for more conservative political transformations in the community's relationship with the Syrian state.

## II. The Baʿth Era and Assad Rule: A Tense Loyalty

After Syria gained independence in 1946, the Druze actively entered national political life. They joined state institutions, contributed to parliamentary life, and even secured ministerial roles in alliance with Arab nationalist movements. This initial engagement reflected a Druze ambition to integrate and shed the isolationism of the past.

But the Baʿth coup of 1963 transformed Syria into a one-party security state, reshaping political equations across all sects—especially the Druze. Traditional leaderships were weakened, Druze society was militarized through mass conscription, and religious institutions were restructured to align with Baʿthist ideology.

Under Hafiz al-Assad, many Druze figures—particularly from the al-Atrash family and other prominent clans—were absorbed into the military and intelligence apparatus. They occupied sensitive posts that gave them a sense of status, but they retained an air of local detachment. This "partial integration" was fragile: the Druze maintained their own education systems, religious practices, and selective conscription policies. Moreover, through their diaspora—especially in France and the United States—they cultivated special foreign relationships, resulting in a dual image: officially present, yet privately aloof.

With the rise of Bashar al-Assad, this pattern continued. Druze elites were embedded in state institutions, but their cultural and social demands remained largely ignored. The mountain appeared outwardly neutral yet remained entangled within the regime's networks. As corruption deepened and legitimacy eroded, discontent simmered—especially among younger Druze, who saw

military service as a burden rather than an honor, being summoned to fight wars with no clear purpose or reward.

This growing discomfort manifested in quiet, socially driven forms: draft evasion, withdrawal from state events, and emigration. Yet the official Druze discourse remained anchored in "functional partnership," not "emotional allegiance," ensuring continued access to privileges within state institutions.

Thus, the Druze–army relationship shifted from a symbol of national integration to a tool of internal control—from a source of influence to a source of alienation. The community hovered between two paradoxes: "calculated partnership" and "unspoken estrangement."

### III. Prominent Druze Figures in the Syrian Military

Establishment Under the rule of the Assad family, several Druze officers emerged as notable figures within the Syrian military establishment. Some played pivotal roles in the army and security apparatus, while others maintained their positions through delicate balances between loyalty to the regime and sectarian identity. Here are some of the most prominent figures:

| Name | Position or Role | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Major General Sharaf al-Din Ahmad | Former commander of the Fifth Division | Played an important role in southern Syria, particularly in al-Suwayda and Daraa |
| Major General Issam Zahreddine | Commander in the Republican Guard and later in elite forces | One of the most prominent figures of the Syrian war; killed in Deir ez-Zor in 2017; heavily promoted by state media as a national hero |

| Name | Position or Role | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Major General Abdullah al-Atrash | Member of Parliament and local leader | Although not a field military commander, his role in local reconciliation efforts made him an influential figure in the security establishment |
| Brigadier General Nazih Jerbouʿ | Officer in Military Security | Associated with sensitive security files in Suwayda, especially regarding conscription and arrests |

- The Syrian regime relied on Druze officers to maintain local security in their regions, particularly in al-Suwayda, but it did not grant them strategic leadership roles at the national level.

## IV. The Druze and the Syrian Revolution (2011–2024)

At the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in 2011, the Druze found themselves at a historic crossroads—torn between loyalty to the regime, cautious neutrality, and silent opposition that later evolved into localized resistance.

Most formal religious authorities sided with Bashar al-Assad, citing protection from chaos and extremism. Thousands of young Druze from Suwayda joined the regular army and pro-regime militias, a stance that disappointed many revolutionaries—especially given the Druze proximity to rebel strongholds like Daraa and the Damascus countryside.

Meanwhile, youth-led voices in Suwayda called for neutrality and non-participation in the war, forming local committees to defend their areas without aligning with either side. Shaykh Wahīd al-Balaʿūs emerged as a prominent religious leader promoting non-alignment with either the regime or the opposition. His slogan was:

"No to the state, no to the opposition," and called to protect the mountain only. However, he was assassinated in a mysterious bombing in 2015, widely believed to be orchestrated by the regime, sparking temporary internal unrest.

Between 2020 and 2024, local armed groups began to appear in Suwayda, rejecting Iranian militias and Assad's forces, calling for their removal from the mountain. These factions refused to engage in combat outside their territory and adopted a civilian ethos:

"We don't seek to topple the state, but to purge it of corruption."

This reflected a partial rebellion against the regime, centered on maintaining Druze autonomy. The Druze proved to be a fragmented entity, with diverse opinions and shifting loyalties—oscillating between political retreat and explosive local dissent depending on circumstances.

**V. Collapse of Facades — The 2025 Crisis**

Following the fall of Assad in December 2024 and the onset of rebuilding a new Syrian state, the Druze spiritual authority—led by Shaykh Hikmat al-Hijrī—turned against the transitional government and launched an armed rebellion in Suwayda. The movement was justified using vague claims such as "minority self-defense" and "resistance to Salafi encroachment."

In truth, however, the uprising followed the government's refusal to grant the Druze exceptional privileges or preserve the undeclared autonomy Suwayda had enjoyed during the wartime vacuum. Leaked reports revealed covert meetings between Druze leaders and foreign entities, including representatives of the Israeli occupation.

**VI. Israeli Intervention and the Bombing of Damascus**

On July 16, 2025—an unprecedented moment—Shaykh al-Hijrī publicly requested Israeli protection, claiming the new

government posed a threat to Druze existence. In response, Israel launched airstrikes on Damascus, targeting military sites reportedly preparing to enter Suwayda.

The Syrian public condemned this intervention in mass demonstrations in Damascus, Homs, and Halab, denouncing the "fifth column" that had invited foreign aggression. The interim government called it a "national betrayal" and began a campaign to liberate Suwayda from rogue militias.

**VII. Druze Militias and the Army Massacres**

In the days following the Israeli airstrikes, horrific massacres were perpetrated by Druze militias against Syrian army personnel in western villages of Suwayda province. Eyewitness reports confirmed public executions, including beheadings and brutal lynchings, with recorded footage showing local Druze fighters coordinating via Israeli surveillance drones.

The shock of these atrocities reverberated across Syria. Citizens were stunned that elements from within had resorted to this level of betrayal—especially since the post-revolution Syrian army had become a symbol of national unity, inclusive of all sects and regions.

**VIII. The Collapse of the "Neutral Sect" Myth**

For over a century, the Druze community in Syria portrayed itself as a peaceful, non-aligned sect amidst wider national conflicts. Yet the events of 2025 shattered this carefully cultivated image, exposing foreign entanglements and a sectarian project that resembled other separatist movements in the region.

These developments revealed that national loyalty is not a slogan, and that "defending the mountain" cannot justify alliance with Israel or the execution of fellow citizens. True protection lies in integration within a shared national project—one that upholds

equality, rejects external patronage, and resists sectarian superiority.[1]

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[1] The clashes remain intense between Syrian state forces and the dissident Druze followers of Al-Hijri in Suwayda at the time of writing.

# 12

## The Druze in Palestine: From Mandate Forces to the Golani Brigade

Palestine has not been unfamiliar with a Druze presence. Since the early Ottoman period, the Druze established themselves in mountainous areas near the coastal corridor—particularly in the northern Galilee—in villages such as Daliyat al-Karmel, Yarka, and ʿIsfiyā. Though numerically limited compared to the major Druze concentrations in Mount Lebanon and Jabal al-ʿArab, their sociopolitical impact gradually increased by the late nineteenth century, reaching a critical turning point with the rise of the British Mandate and the Zionist state built atop Palestine's ruins.

Contrary to stereotypical portrayals of religious minorities in Palestine, the Druze presented a distinct model in their interaction with the Zionist project. During the Mandate years, a Druze elite emerged that aligned itself first with the British and later with the Zionists. Today, Palestinian Druze are integrated into the Israeli establishment, participating in its military, security, and political structures. How did this transformation occur? How did a community that at times participated in resistance become part of the machinery that displaced its own people? This chapter analyzes the historical roots and political consequences of this complex alignment.

## I. From Ottoman Marginalization to British Patronage

Under Ottoman rule, the Druze in Palestine occupied a marginal position relative to their counterparts in Lebanon and Syria, with their presence confined to a handful of mountain villages in the upper Galilee. They enjoyed modest local autonomy under a symbolic allegiance to the Sultan and maintained relatively calm relations with neighboring Muslim communities, though intermittent tensions flared during periods of instability. Politically inactive, they preferred to remain on the sidelines and aligned themselves with whichever power dominated the stage.

Following Britain's conquest of Palestine in 1917, this pattern persisted. Influenced by Druze leadership in Mount Lebanon—families such as the Arslans and Yazbaks, who had cultivated relations with British officers since the Napoleonic campaigns—the Druze in Palestine leaned toward supporting the new authority. Seizing this opportunity, Britain opened communication channels with the Druze, exploiting their desire for stability. They recruited dozens into security forces, especially into the Auxiliary Police,[1] which played a role in suppressing the Palestinian Revolt of 1936–1939. This laid the groundwork for a Druze political milieu aligned with Britain, which would soon become an entry point into the Zionist enterprise.

## II. Early Relations with the Zionist Movement

Ties between the Druze and the Zionist movement began during the 1936–1939 Palestinian Revolt, when certain Druze

[1] Among the tasks assigned to them were: protecting roads and vital infrastructure, escorting British military convoys, and carrying out raids and arrests against Palestinian rebels, especially in the mountainous areas. It is worth noting that these auxiliary or special forces also included men from the Circassian and Bedouin communities. This was a consistent practice of the colonial occupier—relying on individuals from non-Arab local groups or minorities to sow division and hatred among the people of the same nation.

leaders pursued tacit cooperation with the Jewish Agency under the pretext of "neutrality." Zionist leaders seized upon this posture to establish trust with Druze figures. According to Israeli historian Yonatan Shapiro, early contacts between the two sides commenced in the late 1930s and focused on potential cooperation should broader conflict erupt.

During the following decades—particularly the 1940s—this relationship intensified under a calculated Zionist policy aimed at "neutralizing minorities" and co-opting them into the Israeli fold. This policy largely succeeded. Upon Israel's declaration of independence in 1948, the Druze were the first non-Jewish community to recognize the new state. Some Druze volunteered for the Haganah, the Zionist paramilitary force, and later took part in operations against Arab villages in the Galilee. Thus, the foundation was laid for an enduring political and security partnership between the Druze and the Israeli state—a historically controversial chapter in Palestinian memory.

**III. War, Conscription, and the New Identity (1948–1960)**

After Israel's establishment in 1948, its government imposed mandatory military service on the Druze in 1956—a policy not extended to other Arab citizens. Though some community leaders voiced objections, the majority of Druze gradually assimilated into the Israeli army, participating in major operations from the 1956 Suez Campaign to the 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Druze soldiers became prominent in elite infantry units such as the Golani Brigade and in intelligence services where they were often assigned to monitor Arab populations. Notable names included Amos Yarkoni, a Druze commander, and later Mansour Abbas, a political figure within Israel. This military involvement was paired with an Israeli campaign to construct a distinct Druze identity—separate from Arabs and Muslims—through state-

sanctioned curricula, independent religious councils, and judicial frameworks. The Druze were officially recognized as a separate sect from Muslims, part of Israel's broader "divide and rule" strategy meant to extract them from the Palestinian cause and recast their allegiance within the Israeli national framework.

**IV. Voices of Dissent… But**

Despite the widespread enlistment of some members of the Druze community in the Israeli military establishment since the imposition of mandatory conscription in 1956, voices emerged rejecting this path and affirming the Arab Palestinian identity of the Druze. Among these voices is activist Ameer Makhoul, one of the most prominent defenders of Palestinian identity within Israel, despite not being Druze himself, but a Christian from Haifa. Sheikh Raed Salah, head of the Islamic Movement inside Israel, also cooperated with young Druze who refused military service, offering them moral and political support.

The movement "Refuse – Your People Will Protect You," since its launch in 2014, marked a turning point in opposing compulsory conscription. It brought together activists from various religious communities and regions, aiming to break the stereotypical image of the Druze and to reconnect them with a unified Palestinian identity.

Nevertheless, the impact of these movements has remained relatively limited due to structural factors, most notably the dominance of economic interest networks tied to military service, familial ties to security institutions, and the legal and psychological pressure exerted by the Israeli state on those who refuse to serve—including threats of imprisonment and denial of social benefits.

Additionally, separate educational policies and the reinforcement of a distinct "Israeli Druze identity" have further deepened the rift between the Druze and the rest of the Palestinian

people, despite the continued presence of dissenting currents within the community that seek to reclaim national belonging and dismantle the narrative of Israelization.

## V. Druze Stance on the Intifadas and the Palestinian Cause

During the 1948 Nakba, the Druze community played no active role in Palestinian resistance. Numerous sources suggest that some Druze armed groups provided field support to Zionist militias—offering terrain navigation and intelligence on guerrilla movements. This early positioning solidified over time: the Druze took no significant part in either the first (1987–1993) or second (2000–2005) Intifadas.

Their official discourse remained closer to loyalty to the Jewish state than to Palestinian national claims. In the first Intifada, limited youth participation in civil demonstrations was recorded, but the prevailing mood leaned toward cautious neutrality. During the second uprising, Druze involvement was nearly nonexistent, and some Druze units even helped suppress protests inside Israel's Arab communities.

Figures such as Ayoub Kara emerged in support of "Jewish State" legislation, rejected the Nakba's legitimacy, and opposed Arabic curricula—consolidating the political estrangement between the Druze and Palestinian identity, and signaling growing normalization with Israel.

## VI. Druze Today: Loyalty and Fragmented Identity

Although Druze make up roughly 1.6% of Israel's population and about 85% of their youth serve in the army, they are not treated as full citizens. Discrimination persists in employment, infrastructure, and access to public services. The 2018 "Jewish Nation-State Law," which restricted self-determination to Jews alone, delivered a stunning blow to Druze self-perception and

triggered widespread protests. These quickly subsided after promises of financial compensation and improved services.

Over time, the divide between Druze and other Arab citizens of Israel deepened—particularly as Druze youth increasingly took part in Israeli military campaigns against Arabs both in Palestine and abroad, from southern Lebanon to Gaza. Although this elevated the Druze's institutional profile, it did not erase their marginalization. Instead, it fostered a sense of national dislocation: caught between a marginalized Arab identity and active service under a state that denies them full citizenship.

Recent years have seen calls within the Druze community to abolish compulsory military service and rejoin the Arab fold, but such voices remain faint against the military's grip and the socioeconomic networks entangled with it.

**VII. A Case Study in "Alliance with the Adversary"**

Some interpret the Druze relationship with Zionism as pragmatic—an alignment with the dominant power for self-preservation and protection. But a deeper ideological and political analysis reveals that this alignment stems from an internal doctrinal worldview. The Druze regard themselves as distinct from their Arab and Islamic surroundings, even antagonistic at times, driven by beliefs rooted in esotericism, isolationism, and exclusivity.

In this context, their structural integration into the Zionist enterprise stands as one of the most striking examples of "minority alliance with occupation." This entanglement was facilitated by Israel's revival of sectarian fragmentation, Arab internal exclusion, and weak nationalist integration before the Nakba.

Yet despite the security and institutional benefits this alliance has offered, the Druze remain structurally marginalized within Israel and face skepticism and rejection from much of the

Palestinian and Arab world. This trajectory has eroded a significant portion of their historical legacy in Mount Carmel and the Galilee.

## VIII. Their Position on Gaza, the West Bank, and Syria

Druze positions on major Palestinian struggles—particularly in Gaza and the West Bank—have largely been negative. During the 2021 and 2023 Gaza wars, Druze villages did not host protests or solidarity actions. On the contrary, Druze soldiers actively participated in bombardments as part of the Israeli army.

In the West Bank, Druze servicemen are known to operate within border guard units implicated in arrests and raids. As for Syria, most Palestinian Druze—under the leadership of the Carmel religious establishment—endorsed Israel's recent intervention in Suwayda. Public statements from Druze figures openly declared that "Israel must protect our brothers in the mountain."

Thus, a complete picture emerges of a military, political, and cultural bond linking Druze within occupied Palestine and Druze allies of Israel beyond it.

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# 13

## The Druze in Syria: From Neutrality to Hostility — Sectarian Shifts in the Revolutionary Era and Beyond

For decades, the name "Jabal al-Druze" — or "Jabal al-ʿArab" — was synonymous with Syrian national identity and anti-colonial resistance, symbolized by Sultan Pasha al-Atrash, whose legacy transcended sectarian bounds. Yet after the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in 2011, the Druze community underwent sharp transformations — shifting from cautious neutrality to alignment with the Assad regime, and ultimately to armed rebellion and appeals for Israeli protection, as seen in the events of 2025.

This chapter traces those shifts, explores the factors behind them, and assesses the prospects for reconciliation between the new Syrian state and the Druze community after the bloodshed.

### I. Cautious Neutrality: The Early Days of the Revolution

When the revolution erupted in Daraa, Suwayda — the Druze stronghold — was geographically close, but politically distant. Druze religious authorities and spiritual councils adopted a stance of caution, calling on their followers to "avoid *fitna*," even as Assad's security forces committed massacres in neighboring towns.

Initially, the Druze refused to engage in combat, but they also refrained from condemning state violence. Some community

leaders provided moral cover for the regime, in exchange for guarantees that Druze youth would not be conscripted into combat zones.

However, for Syrian revolutionaries, this neutrality appeared superficial, especially as Druze recruits were deployed in military and security institutions complicit in the crackdown.

**II. Open Alignment with the Regime**

By 2013, as the conflict took on a sectarian character, Druze leaders and clerics increasingly aligned themselves with the regime, portraying it as a protector of minorities against "Sunni extremism." This narrative was echoed in the sermons of religious figures like Shaykh Yūsuf Jarbūʿ and Shaykh Hikmat al-Hijrī.

The regime created the "First Corps" in Suwayda and placed the province's security under the Air Force Intelligence Directorate. Druze were authorized to form local militias under the banner of "National Defense," tasked with securing the mountain and suppressing dissent.

Still, opposition voices emerged — young Druze protesters in towns like al-Qaryā organized demonstrations that were swiftly crushed or neutralized.

**III. Between ISIS and Assad: Weaponizing Fear**

To keep the Druze within its fold, the regime promoted fear of "Sunni terrorism," especially after ISIS encroached upon the mountain. This threat was intentionally amplified through tactical facilitation, then used as a pretext for full military control.

In July 2018, ISIS carried out a brutal massacre of Druze civilians in Suwayda, killing over 200 people. Although the regime was suspected of complicity, it leveraged the tragedy to extract political loyalty from the community — a strategy that yielded temporary success.

## IV. After Assad's Fall: Changing Alliances

In December 2024, Assad fled to Moscow as the regime collapsed. Armed opposition factions and civil councils announced the birth of a new Syrian national state — democratic and non-sectarian.

Most Syrian cities celebrated the transition, but Suwayda remained hesitant and silent. Reconciliation efforts were launched, with government delegations visiting the province, yet Druze clerics, led by Shaykh Hikmat al-Hijrī, adopted a hostile stance, refusing to recognize the new government.

## V. The Rebellion of Hikmat al-Hijrī and the Israeli Alliance

In June 2025, Shaykh al-Hijrī declared from Suwayda that "what happened in Damascus was a betrayal of covenant" and "a threat to the mountain's sectarian safety." He warned that the new state aimed to "invade Suwayda and annihilate minorities."

On July 15, 2025, Hikmat al-Hijrī formally requested that Israel provide international protection for al-Suwayda, threatening to pursue secession if the "Druze distinctiveness" was not respected.

Israel responded swiftly, launching an airstrike at dawn on July 16 targeting the Ministry of Defense headquarters near Umayyad Square in Damascus, as well as a facility near the Presidential Palace. Israel claimed the strikes were "a defense of minorities against the radical Islamic threat." According to a statement from the Syrian Ministry of Health, the strikes killed 3 people and wounded 23 others.[1]

Simultaneously, fierce battles erupted in Suwayda as Druze militias loyal to al-Hijrī attacked positions held by the new Syrian

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July_2025_Damascus_airstrikes

army, massacring soldiers in ʿAtīl and around Salkhad. The fighting claimed over 400 lives in a single week and displaced hundreds of families — evoking haunting memories of the 1860 massacres, albeit in reversed roles.[1]

## VI. Dimensions and Implications of the Rebellion

These events demonstrate that the Druze community, despite claims of neutrality, has long occupied strategic spaces in Syria's political landscape. For decades, its dominant religious and social leadership sided with authoritarian rule — and now with Israel — in pursuit of sectarian self-preservation.

Al-Hijrī's rebellion was the culmination of an isolationist impulse that perceived the inclusive national state as a threat, and Israel as a strategic ally. The rhetoric of "national unity," often repeated by religious leaders, was exposed as hollow — their closed communal identity ultimately taking precedence over patriotism and religious solidarity.

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[1] As we write these lines, we are receiving news and reports of crimes committed by al-Hijrī's militias against Syrian Bedouins in al-Suwayda, including forced displacement, the killing of their young men, the rape of their women, and the burning of their mosques. In doing so, these militias reveal their treacherous face—aligned with the Nusayris and Zionists—and their vile hostility toward Muslims. The matter later escalated to the declaration of a state for them in the mountain region, with Al-Hijri appearing in a public broadcast thanking Israel—its government and people—and calling on the International Criminal Court to hold the Syrian state accountable for its 'crimes in Sweida' and to protect the Druze there. Meanwhile, among the ranks of his militias are individuals wanted for justice from the remnants of the Assad regime, including: General Jadallah Qaisar, an air force commander implicated in bombing Syrian cities and towns; Brigadier General Jihad Ghoutani of the Republican Guard; Brigadier General Issam Salman Mazhar, a fighter pilot; Brigadier General Osama Zahreddine; Brigadier General Samer Shaarani; Brigadier General Shakib Ajwad Nasr; Brigadier General Anwar Adel Radwan; Lieutenant Colonel Yahya Miya; and others—all of whom are implicated in crimes against the Syrian people, including torture, killing, and bombings. (See the Zaman Al-Wasl report).

## VII. Druze Popular Sentiment: Is There a Countercurrent?

Despite this grim tableau, youth voices in Suwayda and surrounding villages have rejected the Israel alliance. Independent groups emerged to support the new state and condemn al-Hijrī's rebellion.

Dozens of families sought refuge in Druze villages in the occupied Golan, distancing themselves from the violence. Some communities opened their doors to Syrian refugees.

However, these dissenting voices remain marginal and disconnected from the dominant Druze religious and political leadership. They face defamation and internal hostility, rendering prospects for coexistence uncertain and fragile.

## VIII. Challenges Facing the New Syrian State

The new Syrian government faces a delicate dilemma in dealing with the Druze: full-scale military confrontation or strategic containment without rewarding rebellion.

These events raise existential questions about the possibility of building an inclusive state when certain sects reject the very notion of citizenship and seek foreign protection.

A nuanced approach will be needed — distinguishing between ordinary Druze citizens and elite figures implicated in incitement and collaboration. Transitional justice and open dialogue should be offered to those genuinely willing to embrace national unity.

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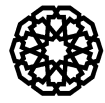
# Assessment and Creed Under Scrutiny



# 14

## The Druze Between Secrecy and Transparency — Challenges of Understanding

Among the most distinguishing features of the Druze sect—compared to other religious communities in the Islamic and Eastern worlds—is its absolute secrecy surrounding doctrine, religious teachings, and even the structure of its clergy and places of worship. This secrecy is neither incidental nor solely historical; it constitutes a core component of their religious and social identity, dating back to their emergence in the fifth century AH (eleventh century CE), during the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh.

**Why Do the Druze Reject Doctrinal Dialogue?**

The Druze creed is not a school within Islam that invites dialogue or theological inquiry. Rather, it is an esoteric doctrine, accessible only to an elite known as the *ʿuqqāl* (initiates), while the general Druze population—and outsiders—are barred from its inner content. Members of the sect do not have the right to read their own religious texts—known as the "Books of Wisdom"—unless they reach a specific age and undergo certain initiation rites into the faith.

This closure is not justified today, as is sometimes claimed, by fear of persecution. Instead, it stems from an esoteric framework

rooted in Ismāʿīlī and Gnostic traditions, which emphasize the duality of exoteric and esoteric knowledge, the monopolization of truth by the elite, and the belief that the masses are unqualified to understand "higher realities."

Such doctrinal insulation has led to a deep epistemological gap between the Druze and the broader Islamic community, fostering suspicion and turning secrecy into a barrier that prevents dialogue, critique, or theological engagement.

**The Risks of Doctrinal Obscurity**

This deliberate secrecy surrounding Druze beliefs has serious implications—not only for religious knowledge, but for the community's relationship with the broader ummah.

- **First**, secrecy hinders the possibility of correction, renewal, or even honest reflection. Religious doctrines, by nature, require a space of inquiry to evolve or be properly understood. When a creed is cloaked in secrecy and withheld from public discourse, it risks ossification, deviation, or even unconscious sanctification.
- **Second**, this obscurity obstructs integration into the Islamic environment and makes building trust extremely difficult. How can a society trust a sect it knows nothing about—one that forbids even basic questions about its belief system?
- **Third—and most concerning**—is the use of doctrinal secrecy as a political tool. In many instances, it has been employed to justify shifting alliances and support for regimes or forces hostile to the Muslim ummah, without enabling others to discern the ideological or religious motivations behind those actions, or to engage the sect in genuine dialogue.

- **Finally**, such intentional concealment—whether deliberate or not—often gives the impression that the Druze creed contains elements contrary to Islam or detrimental to the ummah. This deepens skepticism, even among moderates who advocate coexistence and mutual understanding.

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# 15

## Toward a Sunni Understanding of the Druze Reality Today

The Druze sect has long been a thorny subject among scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah, owing to its doctrinal ambiguity, theological insularity, and politically inconsistent alliances. These traits have complicated efforts to form precise jurisprudential rulings or balanced *daʿwah* positions—ones that neither acquit them unjustifiably nor condemn them without evidence.

### Are They Still Adherents of Their Founding Creed?

To answer this question, one must recall the foundational doctrine upon which the Druze sect was built, after its split from Fatimid Ismāʿīlism in the early fifth century AH. Led by Hamza ibn ʿAlī, the Druze faith declared al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh to be a divine entity—God incarnate. They abolished prayer, *zakāt*, pilgrimage, and replaced Islam with an esoteric code that undermined its pillars and distorted its monotheism.

Scholars from the four *madhāhib* unanimously ruled that such beliefs constituted an explicit departure from Islam. They labeled the Druze as esoteric heretics (*zanādiqa bāṭiniyyūn*) whose creed precludes Muslim affiliation unless they renounce their core doctrines. Among these scholars were Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Qurtubī, al-Nawawī, Ibn Hajar, Ibn ʿĀbidīn, and others, all of whom

emphasized that the Druze creed violates the principle of Islamic *tawhīd*.

But the pressing question remains: Does the Druze community today still embrace that creed? Do its members continue to hold those same beliefs?

The reality is that the absolute secrecy surrounding the sect makes definitive answers elusive. Available evidence suggests that the original doctrines remain preserved in the *Epistles of Wisdom* (*Rasā'il al-Hikmah*), and no Druze spiritual authority has publicly renounced the divinization of al-Hākim, the rejection of Islamic obligations, or the doctrine of reincarnation.

All inquiries into these issues are met with denial, evasion, or appeals to so-called "religious secrets." This implies that the foundational creed remains intact, and that the sect has neither openly returned to mainstream Islam nor formally repudiated its esoteric doctrines.

There have been isolated calls from Druze individuals in Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon advocating theological openness and seeking religious truth. Some have converted to Islam and publicly repented, but they remain a small minority, often subject to social persecution or threats to their lives.

**The Duty of Clarification and Religious Fairness**

This prompts an essential question: What is the appropriate Sunni position on the Druze sect today?

1. **Doctrinally**: The default jurisprudential ruling stands unless there is a proven doctrinal shift. Beliefs in divinization, denial of Islamic obligations, reincarnation, and Gnostic elitism remain grounds for declaring disbelief (*kufr*) until the sect explicitly renounces them, affirms the

two declarations of faith, and enters Islam on its prescribed terms.

2. **In Practice**: Injustice, aggression, and sweeping generalizations are forbidden. Each individual must be treated according to his or her personal accountability, invited to truth with kindness, and given worldly rights without coercion in matters of faith.

3. **In Daʿwah**: Scholars and preachers are obligated to initiate dialogue with moderate Druze, to convey the message of Islam with wisdom, to expose the falsehood of esoteric claims, and to reaffirm God's oneness and the true religion. Remaining silent in the face of misguidance is not tolerance—it is an abandonment of truth.

4. **Historically**: Justice requires recognizing that some Druze individuals have taken honorable stances throughout history—especially in resisting foreign occupation—and have supported the ummah's causes at pivotal moments. At the same time, others have allied with its enemies, collaborated with Israel, and participated in atrocities against Muslims. Integrity demands that we name things precisely, without blanket condemnation or unqualified absolution.

**Conclusion**

The path to truth begins with clarity—not violence, fairness—not flattery, and honesty—not appeasement. If the Druze community genuinely seeks an honorable future within its Islamic environment, it must open the doors to candid discussion, submit its creed to the judgment of revelation, and confront its existential questions with sincerity and courage.

# 16

## Between Secrecy and Identity: The Druze at a Crossroads in Contemporary History

### I. A Community Between Obscurity and Exposure

Since their emergence under the Fatimid rule, the Druze have been known as a community marked by doctrinal secrecy, insular identity, and loyalty to clan and creed above the state. This opacity shaped a unique image in the Islamic and Arab consciousness—one oscillating between respect and suspicion.

Yet in the past two centuries, that mystery has gradually eroded under the pressure of secularization, expanding education, media openness, and finally the digital revolution. Druze doctrine has become subject to scrutiny, and the mystique that once protected it no longer insulates it from intellectual or political challenges.

What once served as a shield has become a double-edged sword: secrecy is no longer sufficient to preserve the community's cohesion or foster a shared project with its surrounding nations.

### II. From a Martial Sect to a Hesitant Minority

The military role of the Druze during the era of the Crusades and the Mongol invasions was local and limited, primarily focused on protecting villages and mountainous regions, rather than participating in major armies or organized campaigns. Their prominent military presence began to take shape later, particularly

during the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925 led by Sultan Pasha al-Atrash, where they played a pivotal role in resisting French colonial rule at the time.

In Palestine, the Druze lost their Arab depth and allied with the Zionist regime. In Lebanon, they became a sectarian force negotiating their political share. In Syria, they split between loyalty to Assad and sectarian seclusion—eventually leading a rebellion in Suwayda and requesting Israeli protection.

Thus, they transitioned from a fighting force to a hesitant and anxious minority—living on the fringes of Arab and Islamic decision-making.

**III. The Danger of Alliance with the Enemy**

Requesting protection from Israel, as Shaykh Hikmat al-Hijrī's leadership did in 2025, marks a dangerous departure in the Druze creed and their place within the collective memory of the ummah.

To go from resisting the French under Sultan al-Atrash and opposing Israeli occupation in southern Lebanon—to seeking refuge from Israel against fellow citizens—is a profound rupture. It echoes the earlier case of Palestinian Druze who served in the Israeli army, only to be sidelined by the state and stripped of identity.

Those who believe that Israel will safeguard their future ignore the reality: the Zionist regime protects only its own interests and owes loyalty only to those who serve its supremacist project.

**IV. The Alternative: Return to the Ummah**

There remain among the Druze free-minded intellectuals and honorable souls who reject this deviation from Islam's spirit. They believe in the unity of the Levant and resist the Zionist project.

These voices are the hope for restoring ties between the Druze and the ummah.[1]

The alternative to foreign reliance includes:

- Integration into the unified national identity
- Reconciliation with the Islamic and Arab environment
- Opening paths for education and theological engagement
- Renewing the religious discourse within enlightened spiritual frameworks

It does not befit a sect known for courage and wisdom to follow leaders who dismantle the dignity their forefathers built.

[1] Among these figures is the scholar Shakib Arslan, who embraced Sunni Islam from a young age. He wrote in defense of Islamic creed, criticized Bātinī sects and philosophy, and considered himself part of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah. He expressed this clearly in his works such as *Al-Irtisāmāt al-Latīfah* and *The History of the Arabs and Islam*. He was also close to scholars of al-Azhar and prominent figures of Islamic reform such as Rashid Rida and Muhammad ʿAbduh.

As for other individuals of Druze origin who left the sect and embraced Sunni or Shia Islam, sources do not document many prominent cases. This is due to the closed nature of the Druze community and the fact that leaving it is considered more of a social and cultural rupture than merely a religious conversion. Nevertheless, there are individual cases—especially in the diaspora—of people who publicly declared their departure from the Druze faith and their embrace of Islam. Among them is Shaykh Shihab al-Shater, who has given lectures about the Druze religion in which he advises Druze followers to follow the true religion. Watch here

It is worth noting that the Druze sect does not accept new converts into the faith, nor does it recognize those who leave, which makes doctrinal conversions rare and often surrounded by secrecy.

# Epilogue

This book has aimed to examine the Druze experience not with condemnation or glorification, but through analysis and candid inquiry—recognizing the religious, political, and social sensitivities involved. The goal of transparency is not to incite division, but to build bridges, not trenches.

The Druze are an essential part of the region's historical tapestry, playing pivotal roles from their Ismāʿīlī-Fatimid origins to their presence in Mount Lebanon and Jabal al-ʿArab, up to their complex positions in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine—with entanglements involving occupation powers and rival regimes. Their stance on central issues—Palestine and the Syrian revolution—has exposed fissures and contradictions.

This study has shown that doctrinal obscurity was not merely theological peculiarity, but a mechanism of isolation, sectarian fortification, and political exceptionalism that hindered sincere integration into Islamic or pan-Arab projects. While their esoteric doctrines remained hidden in secret manuscripts, modern Druze elites formed alliances with foreign powers—from the French during occupation, to Israel after the Nakba, to Assad's regime and, finally, to Israel again in the waning days of Syria's revolution.

The events of July 16, 2025—Shaykh al-Hijrī's rebellion against the new Syrian government, his appeal to Israel for protection, Israeli bombings of Damascus, and the massacres in Suwayda against the Syrian state forces and Arab clans—must be seen within this long-standing historical pattern of contradictory alliances and strategic isolation.

Still, this book did not ignore the voices of reason within the Druze community—men and women in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine—who stood with their societies, embraced their people through hardship and hope, and refused narrow sectarianism.

This work has pursued truth, not defamation. It sought balance through knowledge and justice, in a time where distorted narratives and biased readings prevail. At every step, it anchored its findings in reliable sources—classical and modern, Islamic and academic—so as to offer the reader a clear, contextual understanding of a sect that has shaped key chapters of Levantine history.

Now, the Druze stand at a decisive crossroads: will they rethink their trajectory and return to the fold of the ummah—in creed, identity, and allegiance—or will the path of isolation and alliance with enemies remain their strategic choice? Such questions will not be answered by books alone, but by time, by nations… and by the wise among all faiths and communities.

# Appendices

## Appendix I: Key Figures in Druze History

1. **al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh (375–411 AH / 985–1021 CE)**
   The sixth Fātimid caliph, he marked a major turning point in Ismāʿīlī esoteric theology. His reign was characterized by enigmatic and erratic behavior, and some followers attributed divine qualities to him—laying the groundwork for the emergence of the Druze movement. His mysterious disappearance in 1021 CE became a foundational element in Druze theology, which considers him a divine manifestation whose occultation is sacred.

2. **Hamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Ahmad**

   The principal theologian and founder of the Druze creed. He proclaimed the esoteric monotheistic doctrine in 408 AH, declaring al-Hākim to be God incarnate. He authored the religious texts known as *Epistles of Wisdom* (*Rasāʾil al-Hikmah*), which remain the central reference for the sect. His theology fused Ismāʿīlī esotericism with Illuminationist philosophy and introduced the concept of divine duality (*nāsūt* and *lāhūt*).

3. **Muhammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Durazī**

   A missionary whose name became historically associated with the sect, although Druze reject the etymological link. He was the first to publicly exaggerate al-Hākim's divinity, promoting a radical line that led to his death at the hands of

the masses in Cairo in 411 AH. Ḥamza and his followers repudiated him, yet the sect came to be named after him in historical usage.

4. **Nashtakīn al-Durazī**

   A Persian missionary sent to the Levant who broke away from the central leadership in Cairo and claimed a special status for himself. His actions led to his death. Popular usage associates the name "Druze" with him, though adherents of the faith reject this connection.

5. **Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Tamīmī**

   Spiritual successor to Hamza, who assumed leadership after al-Hākim's occultation and Hamza's retirement. He completed the *Epistles of Wisdom*, and in 434 AH (1042 CE), declared the closure of the invitation to the faith (*bāb al-daʿwah*) and called for dissociation (*taqiyya*) and withdrawal. This led to the permanent closure of the sect, which stopped accepting new converts—explaining its continued insularity to this day.

6. **Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī II (1572–1635 CE)**

   A prominent Druze emir in Mount Lebanon who sought to expand his influence beyond Druze areas. He cultivated relations with European powers, especially Tuscany and Venice, which provoked the Ottoman Empire. Considered a pivotal figure in Druze history for his pursuit of quasi-independence in the mountain, he was eventually defeated and executed by the Ottomans.

7. **Bashīr al-Shihābī II (1767–1850 CE)**

   A Lebanese emir who ruled Mount Lebanon through delicate balance between Maronites and Druze. His allegiance shifted between the Ottoman state and

Muhammad ʿAlī of Egypt, leading to his eventual removal. His reign witnessed widespread sectarian strife between Druze and Maronites.

8. **Sultan Pasha al-Atrash (1891–1982 CE)**

   A nationalist Syrian Druze, and one of the leaders of the Great Syrian Revolt against French colonial rule in 1925. Though rooted in Druze heritage, his politics were secular and pan-Arab. He championed Syrian independence and unity, rejecting all partitionist schemes. He remains a celebrated figure in Syria's national memory.

9. **Kamāl Jumblatt (1917–1977 CE)**

   A leading Lebanese politician and founder of the Progressive Socialist Party. He represented the Arab nationalist current in Lebanon, opposed Maronite political dominance, and maintained close ties with the Palestine Liberation Organization. Assassinated in 1977, allegedly by the Syrian regime, he formed a bridge between the Druze and broader Arab causes. His son Walīd Jumblatt later adopted more pragmatic positions.

10. **Walīd Jumblatt**

    Lebanese Druze leader who inherited his father's mantle. Known for politically fluid positions, he alternated alliances between the March 14 coalition and Hezbollah, later reconciling with the Syrian regime. Criticized for his contradictions, he nonetheless remained the dominant Druze leader in Lebanon for decades.

11. **Hikmat al-Hijrī**

    The supreme spiritual authority of the Druze in Suwayda (Syria). Initially neutral during the Syrian revolution, he later adopted critical positions toward the regime. In 2025, he led

an armed rebellion against the new Syrian state and formally requested Israeli protection—triggering a serious escalation that included Israeli airstrikes on Damascus and violent clashes between his forces and the Syrian army in Jabal al-Druze.

# Appendix II: Timeline of Key Historical Milestones in Druze History

### The Origins of the Doctrine and Early Preaching

### (985–1042 CE)

| Year (CE) | Event |
|---|---|
| 985 | al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh ascends to the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt. |
| 1005 | Hamza ibn ʿAlī declares the beginning of the secret monotheistic Druze call under al-Hākim's rule. |
| 1017 | Emergence of Muhammad al-Durazī in Cairo with public claims of al-Hākim's divinity. |
| 1018 | al-Durazī is killed in Cairo following public outrage at his extremist ideas. |
| 1021 | al-Hākim disappears mysteriously, marking the beginning of the "sacred occultation" in Druze doctrine. |
| 1021–1042 | Composition of the *Epistles of Wisdom* by Hamza and Bahāʾ al-Dīn. |
| 1042 | Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Tamīmī closes the door to conversion, initiating Druze insularity. |

**The Middle Period – Ottoman Struggles and Mountain Leadership Formation (1516–1711 CE)**

| Year | Event |
|---|---|
| 1516 | The Ottomans conquer Greater Syria; beginning of Ottoman rule in Mount Lebanon. |
| 1572 | Birth of Emir Fakhr al-Dīn II, the most prominent modern Druze leader. |
| 1605–1633 | Fakhr al-Dīn governs Mount Lebanon, expands influence into Syria and Palestine, and forges alliances with Italian powers. |
| 1635 | Fakhr al-Dīn is captured and executed in Istanbul. |
| 1711 | Battle of ʿAyn Dārah ends the Qaysite–Yamanite feud, consolidating Jumblatt leadership in the mountain. |

**Modern Era – From Emirate to Nation-State**

**(1860–1975 CE)**

| Year | Event |
|---|---|
| 1860 | Sectarian massacres between Maronites and Druze in Mount Lebanon; direct French intervention. |
| 1861 | Establishment of the Mutasarrifiyyah of Mount Lebanon under European oversight; Druze influence diminishes. |
| 1920 | Proclamation of Greater Lebanon; Druze Mountain annexed to the French Mandate in Syria. |

| Year | Event |
|---|---|
| 1925 | Outbreak of the Great Syrian Revolt led by Sultan Pasha al-Aṭrash against France. |
| 1946 | End of French Mandate; Druze gradually exit the Syrian political arena. |
| 1975 | Lebanese Civil War begins; Kamāl Jumblatt emerges as a nationalist Druze leader. |

**Contemporary Period – From Civil War to Current Fragmentation (1977–2025 CE)**

| Year | Event |
|---|---|
| 1977 | Assassination of Kamāl Jumblatt; his son Walīd assumes Druze leadership. |
| 1982 | Druze confront Israeli invasion of Lebanon as part of the National Movement. |
| 2000 | Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon; Druze enter a new phase of political alliances. |
| 2011 | Syrian revolution erupts; Suwayda's Druze adopt neutrality and later demand reforms. |
| 2018 | ISIS massacres in Suwayda's countryside provoke widespread Syrian sympathy. |
| 2024 | Fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime; rise of the new Syrian national state. |

| Year | Event |
| --- | --- |
| July 2025 | Rebellion led by Shaykh Hikmat al-Hijrī in Suwayda; request for Israeli protection; Israeli airstrikes on Damascus and violent clashes with the Syrian army. |

# Appendix III: Glossary of Key Terms and Doctrines

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| **al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh** | Sixth Fatimid caliph (r. 996–1021 CE), considered by Druze doctrine to be a divine manifestation. His disappearance formed the basis for the Druze belief in "sacred occultation." |
| **Hamza ibn ʿAlī** | Founder of the Druze doctrine, proclaimed the secret monotheistic faith in 408 AH and authored the foundational *Epistles of Wisdom*. |
| **Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Tamīmī** | Successor to Hamza, who closed the door to conversion and codified the sect's isolationist practices. |
| **Epistles of Wisdom** (*Rasāʾil al-Hikmah*) | Core religious texts of the Druze sect, written in Arabic, reserved exclusively for initiates (*ʿuqqāl*). |
| **ʿUqqāl** | "The Wise" — an elite class within Druze society entrusted with doctrinal knowledge and religious texts. |
| **Juhhāl** | "The Ignorant" — Druze individuals not initiated into the inner teachings of the faith; not permitted to access religious literature. |

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| ***Taqiyya*** | Religious dissimulation; adopted as a survival strategy and doctrinal foundation for concealment of belief. |
| **al-Nāsūt wa'l-Lāhūt** | Dualistic metaphysical concept of "humanity and divinity" — used in Druze theology to articulate divine embodiment. |
| **Sacred Occultation** | Belief in the disappearance of al-Hākim as a divine act, paralleling esoteric views of messianic concealment. |
| **Tanāsukh (Reincarnation)** | Belief in the transmigration of souls; central to Druze eschatology and ethical worldview. |
| **Bātiniyyah** | Esotericism; theological orientation prioritizing hidden meanings over literal scripture — shared with Ismāʿīlī foundations. |
| **The Great Syrian Revolt** | National uprising against French colonial rule in 1925, led by Sultan Pasha al-Aṭrash from Jabal al-Druze. |
| **Mutasarrifiyyah** | Autonomous administrative system established in Mount Lebanon (1861–1915), shaped by sectarian power-sharing. |
| **March 14 Coalition** | Lebanese political alliance formed in 2005, opposing Syrian influence; Walid Jumblatt briefly aligned with it. |

| Term | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| **Rijāl al-Karāma** | "Men of Dignity" — Druze grassroots movement in Suwayda advocating local autonomy and anti-corruption stance since the 2010s. |

# Appendix III: Doctrinal Concepts and Terminology in Druze Theology

This appendix clarifies key terms and concepts unique to the Druze creed, distinguishing it from other esoteric and Ismāʿīlī sects. The terminology is alphabetically organized with concise and analytical explanations.

### 1. Tawhīd (Monotheism)

In Druze theology, *tawhīd* does not signify the Islamic understanding of monotheism—affirming God's oneness in His divinity, lordship, and attributes—but instead refers to the divinization of al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh. Druze call themselves *al-Muwahhidūn* (Unitarians) based on this unique conception, viewing al-Hākim as a manifestation of the divine essence.

**Note**: *This belief deviates sharply from the Islamic creed, which defines tawhīd as affirming God's exclusive right to divinity, lordship, and perfection.*

### 2. The Five Boundaries of Reason[1]

The five boundaries in Druze belief are **symbolic and doctrinal pillars** that form the foundation of the Unitarian Druze faith. They embody profound philosophical and spiritual concepts and are linked to founding figures who are viewed as "divine boundaries" or manifestations of elevated attributes.

**Who Are the Five Boundaries** (*al-Hudūd al-Khamsah*)?

Each "boundary? (*hadd*) represents an aspect of existence or the Universal Intellect. They are:

[1] For more details on the *Five Limits*, see https://dorar.net/frq/2220

1. The Universal Inellect – Hamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Ahmad
    - Considered the First Intellect, the supreme boundary, and the source of knowledge and emanation.
    - He is the actual founder of the Druze call and is viewed as a divine manifestation in terms of intellect.
    - He represents the **green** color in the Druze star.
2. The Universal Soul – Ismāʿīl ibn Muhammad al-Tamīmī
    - Represents the second rank after the Intellect.
    - Regarded as the first to believe in the Intellect (Hamza) and plays the role of the dependent and executing soul.
    - He represents the **red** color in the Druze star.
3. The Word (*al-Kalima*/*Logos*) – Muhammad ibn Wahb al-Qurashī
    - Represents the principle of the "Word" or *Logos*.
    - His function is to convey and explain — that is, to transmit the revelation and the call to others.
    - He represents the **yellow** color in the Druze star.
4. The Preceder (al-Sābiq) – Salmān ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Sāmirī
    - Represents the will or the initial driving force.
    - He is said to be responsible for organizing the ranks and offering devotion.
    - He represents the **blue** color in the Druze star.
5. The Successor (al-Tālī) – Bahāʾ al-Dīn Abū al-Hasan al-Samūqī
    - Represents the fifth rank, the one who completes the structure of the *daʿwah* and finalizes the

Unitarian system. He assumed leadership after Hamza's occultation and closed the call in 434 AH.

- He represents the **white** color in the Druze star.

These *hudūd* are viewed as intermediaries between the "Divine Essence" (*Lāhūt*) and creation (*khalq*), forming part of the complex esoteric system adopted by the Druze creed.

**Their Philosophical Significance**

- These boundaries are considered **luminous emanations** of the Universal Mind, eternal and uncreated, manifesting in human bodies across time.
- It is believed that they reappear in every era, embodied in chosen individuals who carry their attributes.
- The **five-pointed star** serves as a symbol of the Druze faith, with each color representing one of the boundaries.

**In Druze Doctrine**

- Belief in the five boundaries is essential for understanding the Unitarian doctrine.
- They are mentioned in the **Epistles of Wisdom**, the sacred texts of the Druze.
- Hamza ibn ʿAli is regarded as the **Universal Mind** and founder of the call, while Bahāʾ al-Dīn is known for having closed the call and completed the message.

### 3. Epistles of Wisdom (*Rasāʾil al-Hikmah*)

A collection of 111 theological texts written by the founders of the Druze faith. Considered the sect's sacred scripture, they are composed in symbolic and cryptic language, relying heavily on allegory and esoteric interpretation. Access to these texts is restricted to initiated members.

**4. Occultation (*al-Ghaybah*)**

The belief that al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh did not die in 1021 CE but entered into divine concealment (*ḥijāb*)—awaiting a future reappearance. This notion parallels Twelver Shīʿī beliefs in the hidden Imām.

**5. Universal Intellect (*al-ʿAql al-Kullī*)**

A Neoplatonic-inspired concept representing the first emanation from God and the intermediary between the divine and creation. In Druze theology, Hamza ibn ʿAlī embodies this intellect.

**6. Secrecy (*al-Kitmān*)**

Often described as "enhanced taqiyya," secrecy is a foundational principle in Druze belief. It mandates the concealment of religious doctrines from non-Druze—and even from non-initiated Druze (*juhhāl*). This has made external study of the sect extremely challenging.

**7. The ʿUqqāl and Juhhāl**

- **ʿUqqāl** (The Wise): The religious elite permitted to read sacred texts and attend doctrinal assemblies.
- **Juhhāl** (The Ignorant): Lay Druze who are barred from accessing doctrinal teachings and are instead encouraged to follow ethical and social customs.

**8. Transmigration (*Tanāsukh*)**

The Druze believe in the cyclical transfer of souls from body to body after death, rejecting the Islamic conception of bodily resurrection and the Day of Judgment. This belief reflects influences from Gnostic, Hindu, and esoteric traditions.

**9. Speaking and Silence (*al-Nutq / al-Samt*)**

Symbolic terms referring to two theological eras:

- *Nutq* (Speaking): The period of open preaching during al-Hākim's reign.
- *Samt* (Silence): The period of withdrawal and concealment following al-Hākim's disappearance.

**10. Manifestation (*al-Ẓuhūr*)**

Refers to the anticipated return of al-Hākim as the divine presence. Similar to Ismāʿīlī beliefs in the hidden Imām's re-emergence.

**11. al-Muwahhidūn (Unitarians)**

The self-designation of Druze adherents, referring to followers of the "call to monotheism"—that is, the recognition of al-Hākim's divinity. This usage diverges significantly from the Islamic understanding of monotheism.

# Appendix IV: Core Theological Concepts in Druze Doctrine

This appendix aims to clarify foundational theological concepts that define Druze belief and distinguish it from other Islamic sects—especially the Ismāʿīlī tradition from which it originally emerged. The definitions draw upon Druze doctrinal texts (particularly the *Epistles of Wisdom*), scholarly analyses, and the perspectives of Sunni scholars on these teachings.

**1. Monotheism (*Tawhīd*) in Druze Theology**

- **Terminology:** Druze refer to themselves as *al-Muwahhidūn* (Unitarians), and designate their faith as the "Doctrine of Unity."
- **Doctrinal Nature:** Their concept of *tawhīd* diverges from Islamic orthodoxy. It reflects a philosophical-esoteric orientation influenced by Pythagorean and Neoplatonic thought, where God is perceived as "absolute transcendent existence" manifested in the "First Limit"—namely, al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh, whom they deem a divine embodiment.
- **Sunni Response:** This belief constitutes a major deviation from pure Islamic monotheism, and is classified as grave *shirk* (ascribing divinity to creation).

**2. Belief in al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh**

- Druze doctrine holds that al-Hākim, the Fatimid caliph, did not die but entered divine concealment (*ghaybah*) and remains alive, destined to return in the eschaton.

- Their texts describe him as the "Divine Manifestation" and ascribe to him invocations and praise reserved exclusively for God.
- This view evolved from Ismāʿīlī concepts of the Hidden Imām but ultimately crossed into divinization.

**3. Doctrine of Reincarnation (*Tanāsukh*)**

- The Druze believe in transmigration of souls—i.e., the soul transfers immediately upon death into a newborn body.
- They reject Islamic beliefs in Paradise and Hell, favoring symbolic recompense and metaphysical cycles.
- This doctrine reflects influences from ancient Hindu and Persian philosophies and constitutes a departure from Islamic eschatology.

**4. Esotericism and Concealment (*Kitmān*)**

- Secrecy is a central tenet of Druze faith. Doctrinal teachings are preserved within the initiated elite (*ʿuqqāl*) and withheld from the public.
- Non-initiates are forbidden from reading the *Epistles of Wisdom* or attending religious councils.
- Taqiyya (dissimulation) is regularly practiced, particularly during times of persecution or political vulnerability.

**5. Books of Druze**

- **The Epistles of Wisdom (*Rasāʾil al-Hikmah*)**[1] are considered the most important doctrinal source for the Druze. The collection consists of 111 epistles distributed across four volumes, attributed to the founders of the

[1] This book was published in Lebanon in 1986 in two volumes and available now at archive.org

Unitarian (*Tawḥīdī*) call. The epistles are notable for their organized sequence. Hamzah ibn ʿAlī authored a large number of them in the year 409 AH, shortly before his disappearance, and al-Bahāʾ al-Dīn continued the writing after 411 AH.

- The epistles include correspondences addressed to prominent figures within the Fatimid state, as well as discussions on the foundational principles of the faith and the *daʿwah* (mission).

**Other religious books include:**

- ***Al-Nuqat wa al-Dawāʾir*** (*The Dots and Circles*): This work addresses the Druze doctrines of monotheism and was printed in Brazil in 1920.
- ***Sharh Mīthāq Walī al-Zamān*** (*Commentary on the Covenant of the Guardian of the Age*): Authored by Muhammad Husayn, this book presents the beliefs of the Druze in even greater detail than the *Epistles* at times.
- ***Al-Suhuf al-Mawsūmah bi-l-Sharīʿah al-Rūhāniyyah fī ʿUlūm al-Basīt wa al-Kathīf*** (*The Scriptures Entitled The Spiritual Law in the Sciences of the Subtle and the Dense*): This book spans approximately 360 pages and was mentioned by the author of *O Druze, Return to Your Den!* as having been authored by Kamāl Jumblatt in collaboration with ʿĀtif al-ʿAjamī.
- The Druze also have a text they refer to as ***Al-Munfarid bi-Dhātih*** (*The One Unique in Essence*), attributed to Hamzah ibn ʿAlī, though some claim it was authored by Kamāl Jumblatt. It is also said that he collaborated with ʿĀtif al-ʿAjamī in composing it along with other epistles. This text comprises forty-four chapters (*ʿuruf* ) and is styled to emulate the Qur'an by echoing the contents of the Druze

epistles. The author incorporates verses from the Qur'an that suit his objectives—particularly those relating to paradise and punishment—assigning them exclusively to those who worship the divinity they believe in, namely al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh. Those who worship him are promised bliss, and those who disbelieve in him are condemned to torment. ʿĀtif al-ʿAjamī commented on this "Qur'an" and the other epistles they produced, saying, "They nearly surpass the Qur'an in eloquence!"[1]

**6. Their Stance on the Qur'an and Islamic Law**

- Druze express outward respect for the Qur'an but do not uphold it as their legal reference.
- They do not observe the Five Pillars of Islam as prescribed:
    - **Prayer:** Not performed according to Islamic rituals
    - **Zakat, Fasting, and Pilgrimage:** Abandoned or reinterpreted symbolically
- They view Islamic law as a historical phase superseded by the "Age of Wisdom" initiated under al-Hākim.

**7. Their View of Islam and Muslims**

- Islam is regarded as an initial stage of divine religion, superseded by Druze doctrine.
- The Druze consider those who reject the divinity of al-Hākim and the Druze creed to be astray.
- Historically, they maintained political and religious silence, but occasionally allied with foreign powers against Islamic or Arab states.

[1] See https://dorar.net/frq/2226

**Sunni Scholars' Verdict on Druze Doctrine**

- **Consensus:** Sunni scholars unanimously regard the Druze sect as outside Islam—not merely heterodox but esoteric and heretical.
- **Ibn Taymiyyah:** The Druze and the Nusayris are disbelievers by consensus. It is forbidden to consume their slaughtered meat or marry their women.

  See *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, 35/161. Also, see *al-Ismāʿiliyyah*, by Ihsan Ilahi Zahir.

# Appendix V: Have the Druze Contributed to Islamic Civilization? — An Analytical Reflection

Whenever a religious sect emerges within the broader context of Islamic civilization, a fundamental question naturally arises:

Has this community made meaningful contributions—intellectual, scientific, cultural, or civilizational—to the legacy of Islam?

In the case of the Druze, answering this requires a careful analysis based on historical sources, biographical records of scholars, and tangible contributions across eras.

**1. Doctrinal Isolation and Intellectual Secrecy**

Since their break from the Ismāʿīlī sect in the early fifth century AH, the Druze have adopted a theological posture characterized by:

- Closing the door to conversion (*bāb al-daʿwah*) in 435 AH
- Concealing their religious texts and teachings from outsiders
- Prohibiting intermarriage or deep social integration with non-Druze communities

This stance led to complete epistemological separation from the Muslim ummah. Their names are virtually absent from scholarly circles, and from the annals of hadīth, *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, and linguistics.

**2. Absence of Scientific or Cultural Contribution**

In surveying the canon of Islamic intellectual history, one finds:

- No recognized Druze jurists, hadith scholars, or grammarians
- No Druze exegetes, philologists, or classical literary figures
- No significant Druze presence in the classical centers of Islamic learning

Their theological education remains confined to internal esoteric texts (*Rasāʾil al-Hikmah*), which are only accessible to the initiated elite (*ʿuqqāl*)—usually after age forty—reflecting severe intellectual insularity.

**3. Limited Political Engagement — Often Sectarian and Reactive**

- **In Lebanon:** The Druze gained political prominence under Fakhr al-Dīn al-Maʿnī II (d. 1635 CE), but his alliances with foreign powers (Tuscany and the Papacy) against the Ottoman state ended in failure.
- **In Syria:** Sultan Pasha al-Atrash emerged as a leader of the Great Syrian Revolt in 1925, yet his movement was nationalist in tone and lacked Islamic grounding.

Historically, Druze political activity tended to revolve around mountain-based sectarian conflicts or interactions with colonial powers—not around Islamic civilizational reform or revival.

**4. Sunni Scholarly Evaluation**

The scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah have consistently ruled that the Druze sect lies outside the fold of Islam due to its core beliefs, including divinizing al-Hākim and rejecting Islamic obligations. Key voices include:

- **Ibn Taymiyyah** in *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā* (refutations of esoteric sects)

- **Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karīm al-Shihristānī** in *al-Milal wa'n-Nihal*
- **Ihsān Ilāhī Ẓahīr** in *al-Ismāʿīliyyah, al-Shīʿāh wa al-Tashayyuʿ*, and *al-Shīʿah wa'l-Qurʾān*

Their verdict: Druze are not considered Muslims, their testimony is not accepted in Islamic courts, their women may not be married by Muslims, and they may not be buried in Muslim cemeteries.

**5. In the Modern Era**

Recent decades have witnessed the emergence of some Druze figures in politics or media—particularly in Lebanon, Israel, or the diaspora—but:

- No distinguished Druze Islamic thinkers have emerged
- There is no notable Druze contribution to core Islamic civilizational questions
- Their roles often align with sectarian or Western-sponsored projects

**Conclusion**

More than a millennium has passed since the formation of the Druze sect. Yet there is no substantial record of contribution to Islamic civilization—neither in religious sciences, nor language, nor philosophical thought. This absence stems from:

- A deeply esoteric and inaccessible creed
- Social and intellectual insularity
- Political positions often opposed to central Islamic polities

This makes the Druze a unique case among Eastern religious minorities: a sect with religious distinctiveness, yet with no discernible civilizational legacy within the Islamic tradition.

# Appendix VI: Selected Passages from the Epistles of Wisdom

## About the Epistles

The *Epistles of Wisdom* (*Rasāʾil al-Hikmah*) constitute the central sacred text of the Druze sect. Traditionally attributed to Hamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad and other founding Imams of the Druze call, most notably during the 5th century AH, the epistles contain esoteric teachings focused on divine unity (*tawḥīd*), negation, mystical interpretation, and spiritual authority (*wilāyah*). They are composed in dense symbolic language and are accessible only to initiated members within the sect (*al-muʿtarifūn*).

## Selected Passages and Interpretive Analysis

### 1. On Defining Divine Unity

"Praise is ours, gratitude belongs to us, creation is our servant, the command resides in us, all is from us and to us it returns." *(Epistle of Wisdom, No. 6)*

**Analysis:**
This passage reveals an extreme form of divine attribution, merging mystical unity (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) with esoteric leadership. It openly attributes divine qualities to the initiates or spiritual figures of the sect—challenging core Islamic principles of monotheism and divine transcendence.

### 2. On the Doctrine of Reincarnation

"Reflect, dear brother, on what you were in the previous cycle, to understand your rank in this cycle; for souls are never extinguished but merely transferred from one form to another."

**Analysis:**
This affirms the Druze doctrine of *tanāsukh* (transmigration), which holds that souls reincarnate into new bodies upon death. The concept contradicts Islamic teachings on bodily resurrection, divine judgment, and the eternal afterlife, placing the doctrine outside the boundaries of mainstream Islamic belief.

**3. On the Secret of Esoteric Knowledge**

"The outward forms of the law are mere husks; the essence lies in the inward. Whoever stops at the outward is misled; whoever is unveiled to the inward attains salvation."

**Analysis:**
This emphasizes the Druze sect's esoteric orientation, similar to Ismāʿīlī and Gnostic philosophies. It legitimizes the abandonment or reinterpretation of Islamic practices—including prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage—on the basis of hidden symbolic truths.

**4. On Praising al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh**

"He is the Creator, the Initiator, the Returner; the Giver of life and death; the Ever-Living who does not die; it is He who has established Himself upon the Throne."

**Analysis:**
This passage attributes full divine characteristics to al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh, the sixth Fātimid caliph, presenting him as the earthly manifestation of God. Such theological claims represent a stark deviation from Islamic monotheism and align more closely with extreme esoteric and incarnational beliefs.

**Closing Notes**

- The *Epistles of Wisdom* are not circulated publicly among Druze adherents; they are restricted to recognized initiates.

- The sect has formally ceased accepting new converts since 1043 CE, rendering the epistles exclusive to the initiated class.
- The majority of their content stands in contradiction to Sunni Islamic creed—especially regarding divine unity, prophethood, eschatology, and religious law.

**References for Understanding and Critiquing the Epistles**


- Muhsin al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿah* (Volume on Sects)
- Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, *Doctrines of Islamic Thinkers*
- Abū al-Fadl ʿĀrif, *Epistles of Wisdom* – Critical Edition, Druze Manuscripts Collection
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# Index of Proper Names

- **Fakhr al-Dīn II al-Maʿnī** — Druze emir considered the founder of the Druze entity in Mount Lebanon during the seventeenth century; clashed with the Ottomans and allied with European powers.
- **Majid Arslan** — Prominent Lebanese Druze leader who contributed to the founding of modern Lebanon and played a key role in Druze and Arab politics.
- **Shakib Arslan** — Muslim nationalist thinker and advocate of Islamic unity and the caliphate; lived in exile following the French occupation. He was from a Druze background.
- **Ibn Khaldūn** — Muslim historian and philosopher; among the first to reference the Druze as an esoteric sect.
- **Ibn Taymiyyah** — Salafi scholar noted for articulating Sunni views on esoteric sects, including the Druze and Nusayris.
- **al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh** — Sixth Fatimid caliph and central figure in Druze theology; believed by Druze adherents to be divine.
- **al-Zāhir Baybars** — Mamlūk sultan who fought the Mongols and Crusaders; faced Druze resistance during his campaigns.
- **Shaykh Hikmat al-Hijrī** — Supreme Druze spiritual authority in Suwayda after the Syrian revolution; led a rebellion against the new Syrian state in 2025 and allied with Israel.

- **Ihsan Ilahi Zahir** — Pakistani Sunni scholar who authored critical studies of Shīʿī and esoteric sects, including the Druze and Ismāʿīlis.
- **Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā)** — Renowned Muslim philosopher and physician; referenced in Druze literature for interpretive inspiration, though not directly affiliated.
- **Kamal Jumblatt** — Lebanese Druze leader; founder of the Progressive Socialist Party and a key intellectual figure of the twentieth century.
- **Walid Jumblatt** — Influential Druze leader and son of Kamāl; known for shifting political stances during and after the Lebanese civil war.
- **Philip Hitti** — Lebanese Christian historian; authored works on Lebanese and Druze history within broader Middle Eastern context.
- **Faraj Allāh al-Hillū** — Leftist Druze intellectual; leader in the Lebanese Communist Party; executed by Syrian intelligence in the 1950s.
- **Kais Firro** — Contemporary Druze historian; wrote extensively in English on Druze religious and political identity.
- **Patrick Seale** — Western journalist and historian; wrote in depth about Syria and the Druze within state narratives.
- **Robert Betts** — American scholar; authored one of the leading English-language books on the Druze titled *The Druze*.
- **Sami Makarem** — Druze scholar; authored *The Druze Faith*, an insider's exposition of Druze theology.

# Index of Key Terms

- **Ismāʿīlism** — A Shīʿī sect formed after the death of Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, asserting the Imamate of Ismāʿīl ibn Jaʿfar and his descendants; serves as the theological foundation from which the Druze emerged.
- **Hidden Imam** — A Shīʿī concept concerning the disappearance and future return of the Imam; in Druze theology, this idea evolves into the divinization of al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh.
- **Esotericism (*Bātiniyyah*)** — A theological current emphasizing symbolic interpretation of sacred texts and concealed beliefs; commonly used to describe sects like the Druze and Ismāʿīlīs.
- **The Call (*Daʿwah*)** — Refers to the Druze's "Call to Unity" led by Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī during al-Hākim's reign; closed permanently and no longer open to converts.
- **Dīwān** — Term used by Druze for their doctrinal writings, often synonymous with the *Epistles of Wisdom*.
- **The Six Heralds** — Founding figures of Druze theology, particularly Hamza ibn ʿAlī and Muhammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Tamīmī.
- **al-Hudūd (Cosmic Boundaries)** — Spiritual ranks in Druze cosmology that surround the Universal Intellect, including *Sābiq*, *Tāli*, and *Nātiq*.

- **Taqiyya** — The practice of concealing one's beliefs to avoid persecution; widely employed by Druze and Ismāʿīlīs.
- **ʿUqqāl** — Religious elite within Druze society permitted access to doctrinal texts and sacred assemblies.
- **Juhhāl** — The general Druze public, denied access to religious texts and instructed to follow the faith through obedience alone.
- **Gnosticism** — Ancient philosophical-religious tradition that parallels Druze esotericism in its symbolic hermeneutics and gradated access to truth.
- **Political Druze Identity** — Modern expression denoting the Druze role in regional politics across Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, especially since the nineteenth century.
- **Greater Lebanon** — The state entity created by the French in 1920, with mixed Druze responses ranging from cooperation to protest.
- **Jabal al-Druze (Jabal al-ʿArab)** — Mountain region in southern Syria serving as the historical stronghold of Druze community; modern-day Suwayda province.
- **Bayān and Tawhīd** — Symbolic phrase in Druze literature referencing the supreme doctrinal principle of divine unity.
- **Double Texts** — Phenomenon in Druze tradition where texts carry both exoteric and esoteric meanings, interpreted across multiple layers.
- **Enemies of the Universal Intellect** — In Druze heritage, refers to those who reject the true form of unity and oppose the path of wisdom.